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Multiple propositions, contextual variability, and the semantics/pragmatics interface

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Abstract A 'multiple-proposition (MP) phenomenon' is a putative counterexample to the widespread implicit assumption that a simple indicative sentence (relative to a context of utterance) semantically expresses at most one proposition. Several philosophers and linguists (including Stephen Neale and Chris Potts) have recently developed hypotheses concerning this notion. The guiding questions motivating this research are: (1) Is there an interesting and homogenous semantic category of MP phenomena? (2) If so, what is the import? Do MP theories have any relevance to important current questions in the study of language? I motivate an affirmative answer to (1), and then argue that MP theorizing is quite relevant to debates at the semantics/pragmatics interface.

Keywords Semantics · Pragmatics · Propositions · Implicature

The term 'multiple-proposition (MP) theory' will be used to refer to theories which countenance counterexamples to the widespread implicit assumption that a simple indicative sentence (relative to a context of utterance) semantically expresses at most one proposition.[1] Relatedly, 'MP phenomena' will be used to refer to putative counterexamples to this widespread implicit assumption. Varieties of MP theory have been developed by at least Perry (1988, 1993, 2001), Richard (1993), Bach (1999), Neale (1999, 2001), Dever (2001), Corazza (2002, 2003, 2004), and Potts (2005, 2007, 2008).[2]

[1] Cf. Bach (1999, especially §4) for discussion of the prevalence of, and motivations for, this widespread implicit assumption.

[2] The philosophers' notion of MP phenomena is closely related to what some linguists call 'multidimensional semantic content'. (Cf. Potts (2005, pp. 10, 44) for references to seminal discussions of multidimensional semantic content in the linguistics literature; among them, Potts' most central influence is Karttunen and Peters (1979).) Refinements concerning the exact relation between MP phenomena and multidimensional semantic content will come up in Sects. 1.4, 2.1, and 4.1.

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In some sense, the study of MP phenomena dates back at least to Frege's (1892, p. 75) observation that certain statements involve "more … thoughts than clauses". (For example, it is plausible to hold that by saying '*Even* Alfred has arrived', one expresses two distinct propositions.) However, theoretical work on MP phenomena has recently burgeoned, at least in part because of its relevance to debates at the semantics/pragmatics border.[3] For example, much recent MP theorizing is focused on Frege's notion of 'color' and Grice's conventional implicatures, both of which have long been acknowledged to complicate the S/P distinction.

The guiding questions motivating this present paper are: (1) Is there an interesting and homogenous semantic category of MP phenomena? (Just confining ourselves to the six authors mentioned above, color, conventional implicature, indexicality, propositional attitudes, and several sorts of singular NP have been alleged to be MP phenomena; so it is not obvious that this strand of literature is focused on one univocal target.) (2) If so, what is the import? Can MP views freshly or distinctively illuminate any general, theoretical questions in the study of language? In particular, does MP theorizing afford the means to clarify any currently contested issues at the S/P interface?

As such, the primary aim of this paper is not so much to provide new linguistic evidence for any specific MP phenomenon, or to advance any original theses in descriptive linguistics. Rather, this is meta-level philosophy of language, aimed at attaining a more refined understanding of the relations between these various putative MP phenomena and theories, as well as at ascertaining their potential implications for some more general issues. Section 1 gives a preliminary exposition of the notion of an MP phenomenon, and Sect. 2 runs through a brief history of MP theorizing. Sections 3–4 consider the question of whether there is an interesting and homogenous semantic category of MP phenomena. Finally, Sect. 5 is addressed to the relevance of MP theorizing to recent debates surrounding the S/P distinction.

1 Preliminaries: defining the target phenomenon

1.1 What is a proposition?

A proposition is a basic bit of information, the sort of thing for which the question of truth or falsity arises. Indicative sentences (relative to a context of utterance) semantically express propositions. If a sentence is used literally, then the proposition semantically expressed makes manifest the speaker's primary communicative intentions. Non-literal uses involve a departure between what is semantically expressed and what the speaker primarily intends to communicate; exact details will differ among the various sub-cases of irony, metaphor, etc. This research is focused on the foundational

[3] I will henceforth abbreviate 'semantics/pragmatics' to 'S/P'. See Recanati (2004) for an overview of this terrain; and see King and Stanley (2005, pp. 111–115) for illustration of the general philosophical relevance of these S/P border disputes.

case of the propositions semantically expressed with literal uses of simple indicative sentences.

I call a proposition a 'basic' bit of information because, I take it, a proposition is the smallest unit for which the question of truth or falsity arises. (Thus, on this usage, disjunctions or conjunctions involve two or more propositions; the notion of a disjunctive or conjunctive proposition is loose talk.[4]) No particular take on the content or structure propositions need be presupposed here. I will also leave open such questions as whether an adequate semantic theory must admit more than two truth-values.

There are at least two necessary conditions for a sentence S (relative to a context of utterance) to semantically express a proposition P: (i) P has to stand in the appropriate relation to (the meanings of) the linguistic expressions tokened, and (ii) P has to stand in the appropriate relation to the speaker's communicative intentions. (This is vague; and, for some purposes, this vagueness would be intolerable. However, precisely spelling out the confines of these 'appropriate relations' would take volumes of their own.[5]) As for (i), I assume that all competent speakers of a language *thereby* have a decent, workable grasp on what 'appropriate' comes to here. (For example, the English sentence 'Please pass the salt' cannot, in general, be used to express the proposition *that Romania is larger than Hungary*.) (ii) is important to add because there are cases—perhaps most or all utterances, if contextualists are right[6]—in which the semantic properties of the expressions tokened will fall short of characterizing the proposition the speaker literally communicates. (To give two relatively uncontentious examples, 'He is in the grip of a vice', 'Everyone was at the party'.) While it obviously would not do to hold that the speaker has complete autonomy as to what propositions are expressed with their utterances, it is nonetheless undeniable that what the speaker intends to express is a primary determinant of which proposition is semantically expressed by a sentence (relative to a context of utterance).[7]

So, to fix ideas (at least a little bit): [U1] a token of 'He is in the grip of a vice' could (in context) semantically express the proposition *that Arnold has a serious problem*;

[4] As it struck an anonymous referee, this claim amounts to rejecting a classical, Boolean interpretation of such connectives, in favor of a non-standard alternative (e.g., Hamblin semantics). Nothing so fancy is here intended. Rather, we need a metric for individuating propositions, in order to begin to engage with the claim that, say, '*Even* Alfred has arrived' expresses more than one of them. We should all concede that the term 'proposition' has been used in various non-equivalent ways; and so any precise use of the term will meet with some awkward repercussions. Taking propositions to be the smallest unit for which the question of truth arises has much to recommend it, for present purposes; and so I am quite willing to accept as a minor casualty that, strictly speaking, there is no such thing as a disjunctive or conjunctive proposition. (Also note that this move does not entail that, say, 'John walked slowly' expresses two propositions, for the truth-conditions for '… walked slowly' are distinct from the truth-conditions for '… walked'. There is extensive discussion below cases which, in contrast, do count as multi-propositional, by this criterion.)

[5] For more on exactly what it would take to dig in and deal with these challenges, see Schiffer (2003, Chaps. 3–4).

[6] Recanati (2004) is a canonical statement of the contextualists' case. More on contextualism in Sect. 5.

[7] This is perhaps most obvious when it comes to the saturation of indexicals or demonstratives—e.g., a token of 'She is tall', intended to express a proposition about one specific individual, uttered in a room in which there are many women. (See Schiffer (2003, pp. 120ff) for an argument which presses this point.) It has been gradually recognized that indexicals and demonstratives are not non-standard oddballs, in this respect; similar complications apply to 'I ran into John today', 'There is no coffee left', etc. (See Neale (2005, pp. 196–204) for a discussion of the importance of these considerations.)

or [U2] a token of 'He is in the grip of a vice' could (in context) semantically express the proposition *that Bill is caught in a (certain kind of) mechanical device*. Either case would satisfy clause (i); clause (ii) is a gesture at what distinguishes [U1] from [U2]. (Insofar as speakers are meeting their conversational responsibilities, their intentions should be contextually evident; but we all fall short of this some of the time, in which case our interlocutors have to press for clues.)

One fundamental question for the present study, then, is: Under what conditions should we say that one proposition will not suffice to capture the content semantically expressed by a literal use of a simple indicative sentence (relative to a context of utterance), and so have to call in more than one proposition to do the requisite work?

1.2 The S/P border

Here at the outset, I will assume a standard (and fairly vague) conception of the S/P distinction, according to which semantics studies what linguistic expressions mean and pragmatics studies how linguistic expressions (whose meaning is settled, as appropriate, by semantics) are used. In general, pragmatic phenomena are carried by the act of tokening a certain linguistic expression (in a certain context), whereas semantic phenomena are more strictly a matter of the expression's literal meaning. Slightly more precisely, I take three related indicators that a certain phenomenon is appropriately treated as pragmatic, as opposed to semantic—out of the various candidates that have been proposed (cf., e.g., Levinson 2000)—to be Grice (1975) notions of 'cancelability' and 'calculability' and Recanati (2004) notion of a 'post-propositional' interpretative process.

I will illustrate these three related indicators with reference to a canonical example of pragmatic phenomena, a Gricean conversational implicature. Consider Grice's case of a reference letter for a philosophy job candidate which reads as follows:

> Dear Sir, Mr. X's command of English is excellent, and his attendance at tutorials has been regular. Yours, etc. (1975, p. 33)

In context, this letter conversationally implicates that its author thinks that, as Grice puts it:

> [CI] Mr. X is no good at philosophy.

For whatever reason, the author is reluctant to come out and say that. Now, this implicature is both cancelable and calculable. As for cancelability, suppose that the letter had continued, after "…has been regular", to say:

> [*] Mr. X is also the most brilliant philosophical mind of his generation.

Although the result would be an odd reference letter, on the whole it would not implicate [CI]. Contrast that with a letter which explicitly says 'Mr. X is no good at philosophy'. In this case it would be semantically jarring, and not just odd, to continue with [*]. So, in general, pragmatic implications can always be cancelled without contradiction, either explicitly or contextually (Grice 1975, p. 39); whereas, to cancel semantic content essentially involves contradiction.

As for calculability, the idea here is that pragmatic implicatures can be represented as the conclusion of a certain chain of reasoning, sometimes called a 'Gricean derivation'.[8] In general, necessary conditions for pragmatically implicating that Q by semantically expressing that P include that: (i) the speaker is to be presumed to be observing Grice's Cooperative Principle, (ii) the supposition that the speaker is aware of, or thinks that, Q is required in order to satisfy (i), and (iii) the speaker thinks that it is within the competence of the hearer to work out the content of Q (Grice 1975, pp. 30–31). (See (Grice 1975, p. 33) for a gloss of the calculation of the above reference-letter implication.) My goal here is not to fashion this into a satisfactory, comprehensive account, but rather merely to point out that semantic competence is necessary, but not remotely close to sufficient, for working out pragmatic implicatures. Extra-semantic calculation, in some form or other, is also required.

Now to the closely related notion of a post-propositional interpretative process (Recanati 2004, pp. 23ff). Pre-propositional processes are things the interpreter has to figure out *prior to* identifying the proposition expressed, while post-propositional processes "presuppose the prior identification of some proposition serving as input" (2004, p. 23). As is standard, I take the disambiguation of ambiguous word-forms (e.g., 'bank', 'trunk') and the saturation of indexicals (e.g., 'she', 'here') to be pre-propositional processes. In contrast, I take it that conversational implicatures are post-propositional.[9] They are pursuant to what is semantically expressed, as some grasp—however tacit (see footnote 8)—of the content of the proposition semantically expressed is crucial to identifying the content being non-semantically implicated. Interpreting irony would be another example of post-propositional process (e.g., 'Cheney is a real sweetheart!'). Phenomena which would be put on different sides of this divide by different theorists include metaphor and quantifier domain restriction.[10]

I should point out that Recanati (2004) does much to cloud this pre- vs. post-propositional distinction. For example, interpretive processes such as free enrichment do not fall squarely on either side of the divide. (E.g., when we hear 'She took out her key and opened the door', we take the sentence to assert that she opened the door *with* the key.) Nonetheless, the distinction is still a useful one for present purposes.

[8] As Bach (among others) has pointed out, it is important to bear in mind that "Grice did not intend his account of how implicatures are recognized as a psychological theory or even as a cognitive model. He intended it as a rational reconstruction" (2006, p. 28). Some objections to the Gricean picture may well be attacks on a straw target, for want of attention to this distinction.

[9] This was certainly Grice's view, but it has been recently contested (cf., e.g., Sedivy 2007). I will follow Grice and count conversational implicatures as post-propositional. For one thing, it is still orthodox among philosophers—and, significantly, among the authors under discussion here—to hold that conversational implicatures are post-propositional. Further, given the extent to which these recent challenges are built on experimental data pertaining to language processing, the worry described in footnote 8 may well apply. (I.e., Grice's calling them post-propositional is not a claim about exactly when or how they are actually psychologically processed; and so it is not subject to refutation by such data.)

[10] For example, Davidson (1978) classifies metaphor as post-propositional, but most of the theorists against which he argues seem committed to counting it as pre-propositional. The issue of quantifier domain restriction concerns exactly how to characterize the proposition expressed by, say, 'Everyone has arrived' or 'There is no coffee left'—roughly, to say that quantifier domain restriction is post-propositional is to say that what such sentences semantically express is literally false; whereas, if these sentences can semantically express truths, then quantifier domain restriction is pre-propositional. For a recent discussion of opposing tacks on this issue see Neale (2008).

I take 'post-propositional' to be a reliable indicator that the phenomenon in question is suited for a pragmatic explanation, 'pre-propositional' to be a reliable indicator that the phenomenon in question is semantic, and do not claim or presuppose that the distinction is exhaustive.

So, conversational implicatures are paradigmatic pragmatic phenomena, in that they are cancelable, calculable, and post-propositional (at least arguably—cf. footnote 9). They are carried by the act of saying that P (in a certain context), not purely by the semantic content of P. This explains why a given sentence could be used to conversationally implicate lots of entirely distinct things, and why other uses of a given sentence need not carry the implication which a particular dated utterance of it might happen to carry.

1.3 The target

In contrast, consider the following:

[1a] That is for dessert.
[1] That *cake* is for dessert.

[2a] I have to look after Cindy's dog while she's away.
[2] I have to look after Cindy's *damn* dog while she's away.

[3a] Lance Armstrong battled cancer.
[3] Lance Armstrong, *the cyclist*, battled cancer.

In each pair, the second member semantically expresses everything that is expressed by its predecessor, but includes an extra linguistic expression which adds an extra semantic dimension. One provocative way to understand these cases is to treat them as MP phenomena. On this view, in addition to what is semantically expressed by their predecessors, [1] also semantically expresses the proposition that that is a cake, [2] also semantically expresses the proposition that I am negatively inclined toward having to look after Cindy's dog, and [3] also semantically expresses the proposition that Lance Armstrong is a cyclist.

In contrast to the case of pragmatic implicatures, these cases at least prima facie demand a purely semantic explanation. The multiple meanings communicated in these cases are not cancelable or calculable (in the relevant senses), and not post-propositional; but, rather, are integral constitutive ingredients of their semantic content. Further, as I will explain below, these putative MP phenomena should not be incorporated into somewhat similar, more familiar, semantic categories—such as presupposition or entailment.

1.4 Further refinements

Next I will do some work to distinguish these putative MP phenomena from various related phenomena. The first refinement concerns the term 'multidimensional semantic content', which has some currency in linguistics (see footnote 2); it at least overlaps with, and is perhaps a rough synonym for, what I am calling 'MP phenomena'. One

potential drawback of this term is that it invites conflation with familiar two-dimensionalist frameworks in philosophical logic (cf., e.g., Stalnaker 1999). Two-dimensionalists hold that semantic contents (including especially propositions) have multiple dimensions, which are made manifest when we take certain kinds of sentence and consider various different contexts of utterance or evaluation. In contrast, MP theorists hold that a simple indicative sentence can semantically express more than one free-standing, independent, truth-evaluable proposition (each of which might then be amenable to a two-dimensionalist analysis). So, the 'multiple' in 'MP' does not modify 'dimension', in the sense of that term that is prevalent in philosophical logic. MP theorizing is a rather distinct phenomenon from two-dimensionalism. (More on this below, in Sect. 2.1.)

The next refinement is to distinguish MP phenomena from generalized conversational implicatures (such as [4]) or scalar implicatures (such as [5]):

[4] John is meeting a woman this evening.
[GCI] 'a' implicates that the woman in question is not his mother, etc.
[5] I have two children.
[SI] I have *exactly* two children.

These latter kinds of implicature are less context-dependent than are conversational implicatures, and are hence more closely tied to semantic content. Fundamentally, though, these latter kinds of case still differ from my target cases in being pragmatic phenomena. The propositions implicated by such uses of [4] or [5] are still things that *speakers* implicate, not things that are semantically expressed by the expressions tokened. For example, like more obviously pragmatic implicatures, they easily canceled. (If said in response to 'Anyone with at least two children qualifies for this discount', say, then [5] would not implicate [SI].) In contrast, MP phenomena are not cancelable, precisely because they are constitutive ingredients of the semantic properties of the expressions uttered.[11]

Finally, MP phenomena should not be conflated with presuppositions. The precise definition of 'presupposition' is controversial (see Potts 2007, §4); I will adhere to an orthodox sense of the term according to which P's presuppositions are necessary conditions for the truth both of P and of ∼P. For example, [6] presupposes [7]:

[6] Sue's kangaroo is sick.
[7] Sue has a kangaroo.

For if [7] is false, neither [6] nor ∼[6] can be true. So, then, what is the difference between presuppositions and MP phenomena?

The fundamental difference is that, in the case of MP phenomena, the two propositions are relatively independent, and hence their truth-values can vary completely independently.[12] For example, the tight constitutive tie between the truth-conditions of [6]–[7] has no echo in the cases of the two propositions putatively expressed by

[11] Cf. Recanati (2003), Bach (2006) for further discussion of these issues.

[12] On this point, I am indebted to Potts' arguments for the more limited conclusion that "[conventional implicatures] have none of the properties that form the heart of the theory of presuppositions" (2005, p. 3). See especially Potts (2005, pp. 32–38; 2007, §4).

[1], [2], or [3]. Obviously, in these latter cases, it can be true that that is a cake but false that it is for dessert, or vice versa; it can be true that Lance Armstrong is a cyclist but false that he battled cancer, or vice versa. In general, there is nothing quite like presupposition—or, for that matter, entailment or conjunction[13]—connecting the truth-conditions of the multiple propositions involved in MP phenomena.

Especially in the work of Bach (1999) and Potts (2005, 2007), data involving embedding play an important role in theoretically mapping the MP terrain.[14] I will delve briefly into such data here to drive home the point that MP phenomena are not just a species of presupposition. For example, while [6] presupposes [7], [8] does not:

[8] Sam believes that Sue's kangaroo is sick.

That is, it is semantically jarring, to say the least, to assert [6] and then add:

[9] Of course, Sue has no kangaroo.

However, there is no such problem with adding [9] on the heels of [8]. That is to say that propositional attitude verbs are presupposition plugs; i.e., the presupposition which [6] carries when unembedded is annulled by embedding the sentence inside an attitude verb.

In contrast, presupposition plugs do not have the same effect on MP phenomena. The difference between [6] and [8] is not paralleled by the following pair, for example:

[3] Lance Armstrong, the cyclist, battled cancer.
[10] Sam believes that Lance Armstrong, the cyclist, battled cancer.

Either one of these is semantically jarring if followed by:

[11] Of course, Lance Armstrong isn't a cyclist.

To be sure, [10] + [11] is not quite as bad as [3] + [11]; so I make no claim that there is *no* difference between [3] and [10] in this respect. However, the crucial point is that there is a difference between the entirely smooth [8] + [9] and the not entirely smooth [10] + [11]. [10] + [11] feels decidedly worse than [8] + [9], and so this is a difference between presuppositions and MP phenomena.

This embedding data is explored more extensively in Sect. 3.1 below, where I argue that (among other things) the contrast between [3] and [10] is paralleled by the cases [1] and [2]. However, when it comes to the crucial present point that MP phenomena are distinct from presuppositions, I take such embedding data to be both less

[13] All of the MP theorists mentioned above on p.1 are clear that MP phenomena should not be understood as expressing conjunctions, or as entailments—again, because MP phenomena lack the relevant truth-conditional connections between propositions. This point is explored more fully in Sects. 3–4 below.

[14] "It seems that Grice overlooked [certain things] because he almost never investigated embedded examples. In general, he used only monoclausal utterances …" (Potts 2005, p. 213). Relatedly, Picardi (2006) alleges that Frege's and Grice's position on 'color' would have been exposed as obviously implausible if either had seriously considered this kind of complex construction: "[Both Frege and Grice] overlooked … that coloring is not, as a rule, cancelled out in reported speech and in sentential embeddings" (2006, p. 62). Note also that Williamson (2009, p. 22 and footnote 13) employs embedding data to support the premise that if pejoratives involve presuppositions, the relevant sense of 'presupposition' is not Strawson's but Stalnaker's—that is, "… although a presupposition modifies the context of utterance, its failure does not deprive the sentence of a truth-value". (More on pejoratives at several points below.)

clear than, and clearly subsequent to, the above point about the relative independence of truth-conditions. So, while MP phenomena are akin to presuppositions (as well as conjunctions, entailments, etc.) in involving distinct and discrete truth-evaluable components, there are grounds to doubt that they should be subsumed into any such category.

To sum up: MP theorists take a distinctive and bold step beyond Grice (1975) groundbreaking framework, in holding that a simple indicative sentence (relative to a context of utterance) can *semantically* express more than one proposition. MP theorizing has some promise to yield some novel theoretical resources. It may well afford new layers of semantic content, to be exploited toward various ends. If so, this would be both theoretically interesting in its own right, and possibly relevant to some theoretical questions both within and beyond the study of language.

2 A brief history of MP phenomena

Frege and Grice (among others) offer seminal discussions of some of the phenomena that are the focus of contemporary MP theorizing (e.g., 'even', 'but'), but neither explicitly takes the distinctive step to MP theorizing. In general, Frege is inclined to treat the phenomena as logically irrelevant, and so as a mere theoretical nuisance.[15] As we will see, Grice's position is not far off. Within philosophy (as opposed to linguistics—cf. footnote 2), the great progenitor of MP theorizing is often taken to be Perry.[16]

2.1 Perry on multiple propositions

Perry's initial idea was that MP theorizing may hold the answer to the problems of cognitive significance which loomed so large in the wake of the development of externalist theories of reference. Building from his (1988, 1993) distinction between the *proposition expressed by* and the *proposition created with* an utterance, Perry (2001) reflexive-referential theory distinguishes several contents which are semantically associated with a simple indicative sentence (relative to a context of utterance). The guiding idea is that this affords the means to accommodate the characteristic desiderata motivating both neo-Russellian and neo-Fregeans accounts of semantic content.

I will not get into the details of Perry (2001) theory here though. Perry (2001) is more naturally classified as a multi-dimensionalist in the sense described above in Sect. 1.4—and see footnote 17—than as an MP theorist in the sense elaborated below. Perry (2001) has developed a *distinctive general conception of semantic content*, whereas my present focus is on a putative *distinctive sort of semantic phenomena* whose study has been influenced by Perry. The sort of MP theorizing which is my

[15] For example, Frege (1892, p. 73) says that these expressions "do not change the thought but only illuminate it in a peculiar fashion"; Frege (1918, p. 23) says that they involve hinting at—but not expressing—thoughts.

[16] For example, both Neale (1999) and Corazza (2002, 2004) explicitly frame their work as following Perry's lead.

present interests concerns a more circumscribed class of semantic phenomena which have been alleged to trigger the expression of more thoughts than clauses.[17]

2.2 Complex demonstratives

One clear instance of this in the philosophical literature comes from work on complex demonstratives (henceforth, 'CDs'). CDs have gotten a fair amount of press over the past two decades—they are theoretically interesting cases in the philosophy of language because they have some claim to be classified on each of the contrastive sides of Russell's seminal referring/denoting distinction.[18] One of the variety of approaches to CDs on the market, developed by Richard (1993), Neale (1999), Dever (2001), and Corazza (2002), is based on the idea that CDs are MP phenomena. Consider:

[1] That cake is for dessert.

The idea here is that [1] semantically expresses two relatively independent, truth-evaluable propositions—i.e., that that is a cake, and that that is for dessert. Again, and as I will return to below, this is neither a conjunction, nor is it a case of presupposition or entailment.[19]

The view that CDs are MP phenomena, then, holds that an utterance of 'This/that F is G' semantically expresses both the proposition that this/that is G and the proposition that this/that is F. This approach is in competition with a variety of other approaches to CDs, to be weighed against various syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic desiderata.

[17] The term 'MP' is used with reference to related work on indexicality and the attitudes in at least a couple of places: Markie (1988) uses the term 'MP' in characterizing Castañeda's work on *de se* attitudes, and Picardi (2006, pp. 31–32) uses the term 'MP' in characterizing a position on attitude ascriptions which has currency among direct-reference theorists (which involves a rigorous distinction between the semantic content of a sentence and putative implications that hearers are prone to draw from encountering the sentence inside the scope of an attitude operator).

Note, though, that the direct-reference theorists who take this tack on propositional attitudes hold that this phenomenon is suited for a pragmatic treatment, and so do not claim that it is an MP phenomenon, in our present sense of the term. As for indexicality, note that it is more clearly a multi-dimensional phenomena in the philosopher's sense described above at Sect. 1.4—i.e., it is particularly amenable to a double-indexed logic in which the affects of the context of utterance on truth-condition can be clearly separated from the affects of the context of evaluation on truth-value.

[18] Neale (1993) played a major role in kindling these debates, by defending the thesis that every NP is either an unstructured rigid referring expression or a structured restricted quantifier. CDs pose problems for this thesis, as they prima facie seem to be structured rigid referring expressions. Cf., e.g., Borg (2000), Dever (2001), and Glanzberg and Siegel (2006) for a variety of discussions of CDs which are cognizant of Neale's thesis.

Note that one significant different between the MP-approach and quantificational accounts to CDs, such as King (2001), is that the MP-approach can accommodate the intuition that CDs are devices of semantic reference, i.e., that sentences containing CDs (relative to a context of utterance) express singular propositions. See Sullivan (2009) for more extensive discussion of, and motivation for, the MP-approach to CDs.

[19] The precise relation between CDs and presupposition is a matter of some contention, due in no small part to the controversies surrounding the definition of 'presupposition' (see Potts 2007, §4). See Glanzberg and Siegel (2006) for an argument that CDs do involve presuppositions, in at least one sense of the term. For reasons registered in Sect. 1.4 and bolstered below in Sects. 3–4, I think that CDs do not involve presuppositions, in the most central philosophical sense of the term.

2.3 Conventional implicatures

Some other fairly well-developed conjectures concerning the notion of an MP phenomenon concern what Grice (1975) calls 'conventional implicature' ('CI'). CIs are distinct from conversational implicatures in that they are a function of the semantic properties of particular expressions, and so are, for example, not cancelable. Somewhat akin to CDs (and even more so to Frege's 'color'), one reason why CIs are theoretically interesting is that they complicate—perhaps even undermine—some traditional conceptions of the S/P divide.

Bach (1999), Neale (1999, 2001), and Potts (2005, 2007, 2008) all develop theories which treat various sorts of CI as MP phenomena. There is, again, no lack of controversy as to the precise boundaries, or the precise analysis, of the category of CI.[20] As my present aims are orthogonal to that issue, for the most part I will just flag points arising within that controversy in passing (and so, henceforth, 'CI' should always be understood as preceded by 'putative'). I will canvass five varieties of CI: (a) the classic cases, (b) supplements, (c) expressives, (d) utterance modifiers, and (e) negative polar interrogatives.

2.3.1 The classics

Stock examples of CIs include the following:

[12] He is an Englishman; *therefore* he is brave. (from Grice 1975)
[CI] It is typical for Englishmen to be brave.

[13] Shaq is huge *but* agile. (from Bach 1999)
[CI] It is unexpected for hugeness to be compatible with agility.

The idea here is that, in addition to semantically expressing the ground-floor conjunctions (i.e., 'He is both English and brave' and 'Shaq is both huge and agile'), expressions like 'but' and 'therefore' trigger the semantic expression of an independent, non-cancelable proposition.[21]

It is not entirely unwarranted to think that these are paradigm cases of what Grice (1975) intends by the term 'CI', and they are certainly very influential in Neale (1999, 2001) thinking—as Neale's agenda is to develop the idea that this phenomenon instanced by [12] and [13] is much more general than Frege or Grice imagined. However, while both Bach (1999) and Potts (2005) think that these are MP phenomena,

[20] Also, strictly speaking, Bach (1999) takes his MP proposal to be an *alternative* to the notion of a CI, so I am misrepresenting his proposal in casting it as an *analysis* of CIs. (See footnote 22, and Sect. 4, for discussion of a relevant point.)

[21] Further developing a metaphor which is prevalent throughout Grice (1989, cf., e.g., p. 362), Neale (1999, 2001) distinguishes in MP cases between *ground-floor* and *higher-order* propositions. The ground-floor proposition captures the speaker's primary communicative intentions, while the higher-order proposition is, in Bach (1999) terms, "secondary to the main point of the utterance" (e.g., color commentary, or background presumption). Relatedly, Potts (2005, 2007) distinguishes one of the propositions expressed as the *at-issue* content, which is defined as (among other things) the content that the speaker is most expecting to have to negotiate with interlocutors before it is accepted as common ground. While I will put these terms to limited work—particularly when expositing the views of the relevant authors—the phenomenon of contextual variability discussed in Sect. 4 shows that such terms need to be handled with care.

both reject the notion that they should be classified as CIs. (The point about Grice's inattention to embedding data raised in Sect. 1.4 is most relevant here—cf. footnote 14.) Bach's quarrel with Grice (1975) about such cases concerns Grice's claim that CIs are truth-conditionally irrelevant.[22] However, as we will see in Sect. 4, an MP theorist can (and should) side with Bach against Grice on that question. Potts' reluctance to count these cases as CIs is a product of his unprecedentedly precise definition of 'CI' (see Potts 2005, p. 10), which includes the criterion that a CI is a speaker-oriented comment on the at-issue proposition. As Potts establishes, there is precedent for this criterion in Grice's work (Potts 2005, Chap. 2), and yet it is rather clear that the likes of [12] and [13] do not satisfy this criterion (Potts 2005, Chap. 7). (The notion of 'speaker-orientation' is discussed below in Sect. 4.1.) Hence, while there is a case for treating these classics as MP phenomena, the relevant propositions do not stand in the interrelation which Potts takes as definitive of a CI.

2.3.2 Supplements

Another case of CI is that of supplements, including non-restrictive relative clauses (such as [14]) and appositives (such as [3]):

[14] John, who passed the test, was elated.
[3] Lance Armstrong, the cyclist, battled cancer.

There are considerable grounds for holding that these sorts of case semantically express two independent propositions (here see especially Potts 2005, Chap. 4), which are not related as presuppositions, conjunctions, entailments, etc. At the same time, they clearly differ from pragmatic implications in being not cancelable, not calculable, and not post-propositional.

2.3.3 Expressives

Another variety of CI is that of expressives, such as:

[2] I have to look after Cindy's *damn* dog while she's away.

As intimated above in Sect. 1.3, such cases are amenable to MP treatment. (I take pejoratives, which are discussed below in Sect. 3.2, to be a distinctive sub-case of expressive.[23]) However, Bach (2007) (among others) raises some objections to both

[22] "I do not want to say that my utterance [of [12]] would be, *strictly speaking*, false should the [implication] in question fail to hold" (Grice 1975, p. 25); cf., e.g., Grice (1989, p. 361). It is relevant that Bach (1999)—unlike Neale or Potts—builds truth-conditional irrelevance into his definition of CI; and so his case for truth-conditional relevance is thereby a case against the very idea of a CI. I think that no such requirement should be built-in, for reasons discussed in Sect. 4. Bach certainly has historical precedent on his side—Frege, Grice, and others clearly held that these phenomena were truth-conditionally irrelevant—but by Sect. 4.3 I will be in a position to explain why retaining this plank makes Bach a proto-revolutionary.

[23] Although Williamson (2009) does not explicitly traffic in multiple propositions, his analysis of pejoratives as conventional implicatures shares close affinities to some of the MP views described herein. Further, he gives a nice statement of the non-cancelability of the expressive dimension: "… someone who says 'Lessing was Boche, though I do not mean to imply that Germans are cruel' merely adds hypocrisy to xenophobia …" (p. 20).

the idea that expressives give rise to implicatures in the relevant sense, as well as the idea that expressive content ought to be thought of as propositional content. I will come back to these questions in Sect. 4.1.

2.3.4 Utterance modifiers

These cases are akin to case (a) above, in that they are commonly cited as CIs, but it is controversial whether they should be so-classified. Examples include:

[15] *Confidentially*, Sal is about to get canned.
[16] *Frankly*, I am unmoved by your request.

Again, though, putting aside quibbles about how best to define the notion of CI, such cases do lend themselves to an MP treatment. Further, following both Bach (1999) and Potts (2005), there are some rather clear differences between cases (a)–(c) and (d). Bach (1999, §5) for example, categorizes utterance modifiers as 'second-order speech acts'; Potts (2005, p. 147) articulates the point as follows: " … an adverb like 'frankly' modifies the relation between a speaker and a particular sentence." This distinctive property of utterance modifiers suggests that they belong in a separate sub-category.

2.3.5 Negative polar interrogatives

I will mention just one more variety of MP-implicature, not because I think that it is the last one, but rather to illustrate just the opposite: i.e., the notion of an MP phenomenon is bound to be quite generally applicable, should its legitimacy be conceded. One such candidate is the case of negative polar interrogatives (NPIs), such as:

[17a] Are wolves carnivorous?
[17] Are *n't* wolves carnivorous?
[18a] Is the boss an idiot?
[18] Is *n't* the boss an idiot?[24]

While I know of no treatment of NPIs in the philosophical literature, linguists tend to treat them as a kind of implicature.[25] In addition to asking whether P, such constructions also semantically express that the speaker thinks that P. Since the implicatures in question are not cancelable, calculable, or post-propositional, the difference between the above pairs seems amenable to MP treatment.

Note that, while philosophers are currently more interested in pejoratives and other colorful expressives (e.g., 'damn fag'), philosophically-astute linguists (such as Potts 2005 and Horn 2007) take cases like Japanese honorifics and the French 'tu'/'vous' distinction to be clear-cut cases of expressive CIs.

[24] This phenomenon of NPIs should not be confused with the pragmatics of rhetorical questions. For example, one might think that "Why are you so lazy?" is amenable to an MP treatment, since it is commonly if not conventionally used to express a proposition, in addition to literally semantically expressing a question. However, rhetorical questions bear all the hallmarks of conversational implicatures, and so should be given a pragmatic treatment. Not so for [17] or [18]. Cf., e.g., Bach (2005, p. 17) on pragmatic regularities.

[25] The linguistics literature on NPIs is large and complex—cf. Romero and Han (2004) for discussion and references, and Reese (2007) for an extensive account of NPIs. My two examples obviously do not amount to much, on their own; but they do clearly suggest that at least some NPIs are multi-dimensional. Compare Reese (2007, pp. 8, 196, and throughout Chap. 4), who categorizes NPIs as involving a kind of "conventionalized indirect speech act".

2.4 Beyond CDs and CIs, how far can we go?

So conjectures about MP phenomena have been developed, first for the case of CDs, and subsequently and more extensively for CIs. What other MP hypotheses and allegations exist?

Neale (1999, 2001) articulates the most ambitious and programmatic aspirations concerning the notion of MP phenomena. Neale's agenda is to tentatively explore the ways in which MP theorizing might "extricate ourselves from … a semantic straitjacket" (1999, p. 36). Following Perry, externalist-friendly solutions to problems of cognitive significance are definitely part of Neale's plan; but this is just the thin end of the wedge. For Neale, MP theorizing has promise to end once and for all debates between Russellians and their opponents concerning the semantics of descriptions (1999, pp. 69–72); as well as to illuminate issues surrounding various other singular NPs (1999, 72ff). (Related MP-conjectures concerning varieties of singular NP are developed by Corazza (2003, 2004); cf. footnote 36 below.) Another of the potential virtues of MP theorizing explored by Neale (1999, 2001) is that it may afford the means for rejecting Frege's tenet that differences of 'color' are semantically irrelevant. As I will return to at several points below, MP theorists have at their disposal relatively rich resources for fine-grained semantic distinctions.[26]

3 Does 'MP phenomenon' label a homogenous, interesting category?

The above brief canvass does not even scratch the surface of a comprehensive account of any particular type of expression. (For starters, to completely develop an MP-approach to CDs, I would have to get into the details of, say, Dever (2001) theory of their syntax, and then address criticisms that have been raised against it; for the case of CIs, I would have to get into the details of, say, Potts' (2005) views about the syntax and logic of these expressions, and then engage with subsequent criticisms.) However, my present aim is a general philosophical investigation of the nature and extent of the putative semantic category of MP phenomena. It is not implausible that this may prove worthwhile per se (cf. Sect. 5); and it may well help to guide further detailed syntactic and semantic research.

As I am using the term, the core of the concept of an MP-phenomenon is the non-cancelable, non-calculable, and not post-propositional semantic expression of more than one discrete and distinct truth-evaluable bit of information, with a literally used token of a simple sentence.[27] Thus understood, the Frege-Grice classic cases (cf. Sect. 2.3.1) might plausibly be taken as paradigmatic MP phenomena. (This com-

[26] The recent explosion in the literature of the semantics of pejoratives is one sub-area in which this idea has really taken off. The guiding idea here is that the extra semantically expressed proposition best accounts for the difference between 'John is a homosexual', 'John is a queer', 'John is a fag', etc. See Sects. 3–4 below for further explorations of this terrain, and see Picardi (2006) for discussions of these and other ambitions of MP theorizing.

[27] Thus, I disagree with an anonymous referee who says "… at its root, the MP idea is just a logical technique …". Reflection on certain semantic phenomena is conceptually prior, and spurs the development of

pletely accords with Neale (1999, 2001) map of the terrain, for example; and while we have seen that both Bach (1999) and Potts (2005) are skeptical about classifying them as CIs, recall that neither disputes their MP status.) Supplements (cf. Sect. 2.3.2) are also strong contenders for MP status; though they clearly involve more complex information structure, and so might not be classified as "simple" sentences. Working outward from this relatively safe base of paradigm cases, Potts (2005, 2007, 2008) builds a considerable case in favor of the claim that supplements and expressives are instances of the same semantic natural kind; and I take it that that claim could survive the demise of many specific details of Potts' semantic theory of that kind.[28] Like the classics and supplements, there are grounds to hold that simple sentences containing expressives (relative to a context of utterance) semantically express multiple, relatively independent, basic bits of information.

Further afield from the core, base MP phenomena, the provocative conjectures about color or singular NPs mentioned above in Sect. 2.4 are considerably harder to evaluate, in the absence of a more precise working definition. (Sure, an MP approach to ordinary proper names would get us out of some binds—cf. Neale (1999, pp. 72–75); but, unlike in the paradigmatic cases, the brute semantic phenomenology hardly compels us toward the claim that sentences containing proper names (relative to a context of utterance) express more thoughts than clauses.) So, then, what about the boundaries of this putative category of MP phenomenon? What sorts of tests should be applied, to determine whether a certain candidate ought to be counted as an MP phenomenon? The closest precedents I am aware of, for this sort of task, are Bach (1999) indirect quotation [IQ] test and some of Potts' (2005) arguments that CIs constitute a distinctively multi-dimensional semantic category. However, neither of those projects is focused on exactly my present target. (Bach's IQ test is intended to identify truth-conditional relevance, and Potts' work is, by and large, limited in scope to supplements and expressives.)

What follows is put forward as a small illustrative sample of the kinds of test which might be applied toward the end of fashioning a more precise working definition of the notion of an MP phenomena. Both the tests explored below should be read as piecemeal exploratory conjecture, and not as definitive or categorical. Neither is completely straightforward, and neither comes remotely close to identifying necessary conditions for MP-status. Rather, they are proposed as work toward developing principled ways to help bolster the claim that a certain phenomenon is suited for MP-treatment.

3.1 The embedding test

First, remember back to Sect. 1.4, and the appeal to embedding data to motivate the distinction between presuppositions and MP phenomena:

Footnote 27 continued
the logical technique. The present question is whether there are expressions to which the logical technique is appropriately fitted.

[28] Cf. Amaral et al. (2007) for extensive critical discussion of Potts (2005). Again, I will return in Sect. 4.1 to some pertinent open questions about Potts' proposal (e.g., about speaker-orientation, or about whether the expressive dimension ought to be thought of as propositional).

[6] Sue's kangaroo is sick.
[7] Sue has a kangaroo.
[8] Sam believes that Sue's kangaroo is sick.
[9] Of course, Sue has no kangaroo.

[6]+[9] is semantically jarring, but [8]+[9] is perfectly smooth, because the attitude verb in [8] plugs [6]'s presupposition of [7].

In contrast, either [3] or [10] is semantically jarring if followed by [11]:

[3] Lance Armstrong, the cyclist, battled cancer.
[10] Sam believes that Lance Armstrong, the cyclist, battled cancer.
[11] Of course, Lance Armstrong isn't a cyclist.

As I conceded above in Sect. 1.3, [10] + [11] is not quite as bad as [6] + [9]. Let us dub [10] + [11] = [20]:

[20#] Sam believes that Lance Armstrong, the cyclist, battled cancer; but, of course, Lance Armstrong isn't a cyclist.

[20] would normally be interpreted as a sloppy and potentially misleading version of what is more clearly said by [21]:

[21] Sam believes that Lance Armstrong is a cyclist, and that he survived cancer; but, of course, Lance Armstrong isn't a cyclist.

And the key difference between the jarring [20] and the smooth [21] is that [21] explicitly unpacks the two discrete propositions that putatively constitute [3]. So, if we unpack the two propositions allegedly expressed by the putative MP phenomenon, then we get an entirely grammatical construction. This highlights the multi-propositional aspect of [3]; it indicates that [3] involves distinct and discrete truth-evaluable elements.

This point generalizes, across CDs and some varieties of CI:

[22#] Sam believes that I have to look after Cindy's damn dog while she is away; but I am not negatively inclined toward having to look after Cindy's dog.
[23] Sam believes that I have to look after Cindy's dog while she is away, and that I am negatively inclined toward having to do so; but I have no such negative inclination.
[24#] Sam believes that that cake is for dessert; but that isn't a cake.[29]
[25] Sam believes that that is a cake and that it is for dessert; but it isn't a cake.

If grammatical at all, [22] and [24] are sloppy, jarring, and potentially misleading attempts to say what is more clearly said by [23] and [25].

So, here is the embedding test for MP status: embed the putative MP phenomenon inside the scope of a propositional attitude operator, and conjoin to that the negation of the higher-order, non-at-issue, proposition. If the result is smooth, the putative MP

[29] Note that there are points of contact between this present question (i.e., Is [24] ill-formed?) and the debates over whether CDs admit of scope ambiguities—cf. King (2001), Neale (2008). The view that [24] is ill-formed/that CDs do not, in general, admit of scope ambiguities, is the majority but not unanimous opinion. I pick up this point again at footnote 36.

phenomenon seems to be more like a presupposition (cf. [8] + [9] above). If the result is jarring, see if explicitly unpacking the two putative propositions improves the construction. If it does, then the putative MP phenomenon passes the embedding test for MP status. This test suggests that the original unembedded construction is composed of distinct and discrete truth-evaluable elements.

Now, the embedding test is limited in that it does not smoothly apply to, say, utterance modifiers (cf. Bach 1999) or NPIs.[30] Interestingly, what I above referred to as 'the classics' pattern with presuppositions under this test. Consider the perfectly smooth:

[26] Marv believes that Shaq is huge but agile; but there is nothing jarring or unexpected about the conjunction of hugeness and agility.

Here again we approach the sorts of considerations which motivate Potts (2005), among others, to deny that the classics should be classified as CIs. In any case, supplements, expressives, and CDs pass the embedding test for MP-status.[31]

3.2 The color test

This test is primarily focused on what Frege calls differences of 'color' (e.g., 'nag' vs. 'steed'). We begin from an observation of Picardi's:

> Inevitably, perhaps, Frege's category of coloring is a miscellaneous one, and he was more interested in brushing aside this aspect of meaning than in accounting for it. (2006, p. 40)

Let me stipulate, then, the following definition of what is, at least potentially, a proper sub-category of coloring:

> 'X' and 'Y' *merely differ in color* iff they differ only in conditions for appropriate assertability, but not in truth-conditions.

It is not hard to find plausible candidates of mere differences in color in colloquial slang; though it is considerably harder to find unobjectionable non-slang candidates. (Certainly, Frege's candidates do not work in my dialect, as 'nag' and 'steed', say, refer

[30] A referee questions: What about 'Mary wondered whether wolves aren't carnivorous?' This may just be a difference in dialect between that referee and I, but I hear that sentence as merely a slightly pretentious way of saying that she wondered whether they are. To my ears, embedding NPIs inside the scope of an attitude verb carries no "conventionalized indirect speech act" (cf. footnote 25). Thus, NPIs will pattern with presuppositions, for the case of the embedding test. (That is, the following strikes me as perfectly smooth: 'Mary wondered whether wolves aren't carnivorous; but she (herself) does not (necessarily) believe that they are.')

However, that that should be taken to demonstrate the shortcomings of the embedding test, for present purposes, rather than to demonstrate that NPIs involve presuppositions, because NPIs pattern with MP phenomena when it comes to the crucial point about the relative independence of truth-values (cf. Sect. 1.4).

[31] For various insightful discussions of related embedding data, cf. Bach (1999), Recanati (2003), Potts (2005), Horn (2005), and Neale (2008). Cf. especially Amaral et al. (2007) for reasons to think that the embedding test is far from straightforward; it would takes delicate care to refine this into anything like necessary or sufficient evidence for MP status. However, unrefined though it is, I take it that it still can provide prima facie evidence that the original constructions involve discrete and distinct truth-evaluable components.

to distinct proper subsets of 'horse'.) Candidate examples for pairs of terms which merely differ in color (at least in my dialect) include: 'with child' vs. 'knocked up', 'passed away' vs. 'kicked the bucket', and 'assassinated' vs. 'whacked'.

If two expressions differ merely in color, then interchanging them may result in pragmatic mistakes, and potentially misleading indirect quotations, but will never affect truth-conditions. For example, though crude, [27] and [28] are (at least in my dialect) truth-conditionally equivalent to [27a] and [28a]:

[27] The Queen called a press conference to announce that her daughter is knocked up.
[28] CNN just reported that Bhutto got whacked.
[27a] The Queen called a press conference to announce that her daughter is with child.
[28a] CNN just reported that Bhutto was assassinated.[32]

So, some important questions for someone who wants to run an MP story about color include: Are there differences of color which go beyond mere differences of color? Are there contexts in which interchanging terms which differ in color can affect truth-conditions? This is the focus of the color test.

Now suppose John says to me:

[29] I would never vote for Obama because he is a nigger.

We can all agree, I think, that there are contexts in which it is appropriate for me to report that:

[30] John said that he won't vote for Obama because he is black.

However, there are clearly contexts in which that report *would* be inappropriate, because the aspect of [29] that [30] white-washes might be centrally relevant. (For example, if what is at issue is John's inclination towards racism, then [30] is not appropriate.[33])

There is the further intuition here that there are contexts in which [30] would be not just inappropriate, but inaccurate, false. Suppose John holds a public office, and allegations arise accusing him of being racist. A formal inquiry is called, and I am called to testify. The question comes up: "Have you and John ever discussed Barrack Obama's political campaign?". In this context, there is some reason to think that [30] may semantically express something false.

Now, to be sure, we are dealing with rather peripheral semantic intuitions here. (Even further, this present test combines all the complications which pertain to the embedding test (cf. footnote 31) with another thorny issue, i.e., the semantics of pejoratives.) I am not going to try to convince dissenters that [30] expresses something

[32] Even further, if I were told [27] or [28], I would interpret them as [27a] or [28a]—given relevant background knowledge, one would not, ceteris paribus, interpret these as attributing that particular choice of words.

[33] Crucially, [30] is not necessarily racist. For suppose John is a strategic voter whose first choice for President is Obama, and who thinks it would be wonderful if the US had a black President, but thinks that there is no chance whatsoever of Obama winning the election. So, John might strategically vote for his second choice. [30] might be apt, while [29], and the charge of racism, are not.

false, not just inappropriate, in this context. Rather, all that I need for present purposes is a more conservative point, which strikes me as scarcely deniable—namely, the grounds for thinking that (relative to the above context) [30] semantically expresses something false are considerably stronger than the grounds for thinking that (relative to the above context) [27] or [28] semantically expresses something false. That is enough to establish that differences of color may, to varying degrees, go beyond *mere* differences of color. 'With child' vs. 'knocked up' differ only in conditions for appropriate assertability, not in semantic content (at least in my dialect); but this is much less obviously so for the case of 'black' vs. 'nigger'. There are grounds to classify the difference between 'black' and 'nigger' as *semantic*; and an MP-approach to expressives smoothly accommodates this point.[34]

Though most starkly made for the case of pejoratives, this test does apply to expressives more generally. For example, more or less everything said about [29] vs. [30] can apply to:

[2] I have to look after Cindy's *damn* dog while she is away.
[31] Arthur said that he has to look after Cindy's dog while she is away.

(E.g., I say [2] to Mary, and later Cindy asks Mary whether I said anything to Mary about Cindy's dog, something *semantic*—not just pragmatic—is missing if Mary replies with [31].) So, it seems, there is a semantic difference between expressives and co-extensive but non-expressive terms (or co-extensive but differently-expressive terms—e.g., 'queer' vs. 'fag'). There are contexts in which that difference is at issue; in such cases, it is arguable that the differences are truth-conditionally relevant.

If this is so—if some differences of color are not mere color differences, but rather can affect truth-conditions in certain contexts—then this is further evidence in favor of the multi-dimensional semantic aspects of these phenomena. Again, it suggests that there are distinct and discrete propositions at play.

The primary, explicit aim of this color test is to isolate the expressive dimension, which we might otherwise be inclined to treat as truth-conditionally irrelevant, and to imagine scenarios in which that expressive dimension is at-issue. We could develop an analogous but more broadly applicable color test.[35] For example, if John sincerely utters [1], and I happen to know that he is mistakenly pointing at a pie but correct that it is for dessert, are there circumstances in which [32] should be counted as false?

[1] That cake is for dessert.
[32] John said that that pie is for dessert.

If Marv utters [13], are there circumstances in which [33] is not just inaccurate but false?

[34] Cf., e.g., Hom (2008) for an argument in favor of a semantic treatment of differences of color among co-referential pejoratives. Note, as a further example, that the fact that discriminated groups often come to endorse pejoratives (e.g., 'nigger', 'queer'), and subsequently use them as banners of pride, especially lends itself to an MP analysis. The original negative content of such terms, while not fully in effect, is clearly an important, operative dimension—and, quite plausibly, a semantic dimension—of such uses of these terms.

[35] Certainly, the French pronouns 'tu' vs. 'vous' will pass the color test—cf. the latter point made in footnote 23. Compare also Horn's (2007, pp. 57–59) discussion of the significance of some parallel data, which pertains to the question of whether the difference between definite and indefinite determiners should be understood as an CI of uniqueness.

[13] Shaq is huge but agile.
[33] Marv said that Shaq is huge and agile.

To the extent that we can design a context in which the higher-order, non-at-issue content (i.e., whether the demonstratum is a cake or pie, or whether hugeness is a barrier to agility) is contentious, these questions should be answered affirmatively. Again this would suggest that such cases semantically involve distinct and discrete truth-evaluable elements. (Some further examples are discussed in Sect. 4.) So further investigating this avenue may well yield further evidence in favor of the MP-status of such constructions.

3.3 Summary

In Sects. 2.2–2.3, a prima facie case was laid out in favor of the MP-status of CDs and some sub-varieties of CI; and in Sects. 2.4 some other provocative MP conjectures were also mentioned.[36] The above two tests are a small illustrative sample of the kinds of things that could be done to fashion a more precise and operational working definition of an MP phenomenon, which would be helpful in order to test such conjectures. The results of the tests are as follows: Expressives pass both the embedding and color test for MP-status (though, again, there are open questions about whether the expressive dimension ought to be thought of as propositional, to which I return in Sect. 4.1). CDs and supplements pass the embedding test; though the classic cases of putative CIs do not, and the test does not apply smoothly to utterance modifiers or NPIs. It was also suggested that CDs and the classic putative CIs might pass an analogue of the color test—and surely at least supplements and utterance modifiers would as well.[37]

[36] In particular, as mentioned in Sect. 2.4, Neale (1999) advocates an MP approach to definite descriptions; relatedly, Corazza (2003) develops an MP approach to what he calls 'description names' (e.g., 'the Virgin Mary', 'the Red Devils'). These conjectures are not without motivation, for, like CDs, these types of dual-purpose singular NPs involve a certain extra dimension of meaning—above and beyond the contribution to ground-floor truth-conditions. (In particular, it seems clear that all three will pass the extended analogue of the color test described above, and in footnote 37.) However, there are also differences among the ranks, though it is beyond the scope of the present essay to do them any justice. (For discussion, cf. Neale 2008; Sullivan 2009). Note the following two related points: first, referential uses of descriptions will not so easily pass the embedding test, for the reason alluded to in footnote 29 (i.e., scope ambiguities are much more easily seen for the case of definite descriptions than for CDs); and second, consider how much more compelling a pragmatic account of referential uses of definite descriptions is, as compared to a pragmatic account of the auxiliary nominal in a CD. On these grounds, I think that the case in favor of an MP-approach to CDs is stronger that the analogous claim concerning these otherwise somewhat similar singular NPs.

[37] That is, compare the following pairs:

[3] Lance Armstrong, the cyclist, battled cancer.
[34] John said that Lance Armstrong battled cancer.
[16] Frankly, I am unmoved by your request.
[35] John said that he was unmoved by my request.

To the extent that we can design contexts in which the higher-order, non-at-issue content is contentious, such cases instance the relevant difference.

4 Some further complications and refinements

I turn now to some complications to the very idea of a homogenous, significant semantic category of an MP phenomenon, and then I will develop some refinements that are suggested by these complications.

4.1 Some worries as to the homogeneity of the putative category

Many CIs (and especially expressives) are open-textured in that there seems to be—often if not typically—some leeway, some amorphousness, as to the precise content of the implicature. For example, Potts (2007, §2) holds that it is "certainly very hard", and perhaps even "impossible", to paraphrase an expressive. Potts calls this property "ineffability", and muses that it might further bolster the case that CIs constitute a separate meaning dimension. Well, maybe; but, to the contrary, I think that "ineffability" is an overstatement which unnecessarily plays into the hands of Bach's (2007, pp. 494–495) aforementioned argument that whatever expressives semantically add, it should not be characterized as propositional. (Here we arrive at one non-trivial difference between the philosophers' 'MP phenomena' and the linguists' 'multidimensionality': A linguist may be comfortable with an ineffable semantic dimension, but philosophers are prone to find the idea of an ineffable proposition oxymoronic. The philosopher's propositions are essentially truth-evaluable; to the extent that this is not so for the case of the linguist's dimensions, then here emerges a difference which will be important to bear in mind.)

For present purposes, I have tried to chart a middle course between Potts and Bach on this question: i.e., expressive content can be propositional (in the sense defined in Sect. 1.1), but that propositional content can be—often if not typically—vague or amorphous.[38] For example, the [CI] associated with [2] is not so specific as "I hate dogs", or "I resent Cindy for this imposition"; even if that more precise content better captures exactly what the speaker intends to communicate in a particular case. Rather, the higher-order content semantically expressed is more general, flexible, context-independent: "I am negatively inclined toward having to look after Cindy's dog". (On this point, compare Bach's (1999, §2) case that even the meaning of 'but' is rather vague and variable.)

In any case, an important present point is that is that this kind of open-texturedness is absent in many of the other cases of MP phenomena (i.e., CDs, supplements, NPIs,

[38] As for motivations for insisting that expressive content is propositional, again, the guiding intuition is that there is a natural semantic category which subsumes both 'damn' in [2] and 'but' in [13]. Such cases are alike in semantically expressing multiple basic bits of information.

A related point on which Potts may do his sort of view injustice, and plays into the hands of Bach (2007) objections that expressive content is not propositional, is his claim that expressive content is non-deniable: "A sincere utterance of 'damn' cannot be challenged or turn out to be false. … [E]xpressives … are also not challengeable by a hearer" (Potts 2005, p. 157). I challenge and deny this claim. If A says "The damn Republicans are at it again", and B replies with "They are not 'damn' Republicans", B has let the ground-floor content pass but rejected the higher-order proposition. As far as I can tell, this case is akin to "That cake is for dessert" followed by "That's not a cake; it's a pie". (Compare Horn's (2007, p. 59) discussion of this sort of negation.)

etc.). There is nothing vague or amorphous about the non-at-issue content expressed by lots of these other MP phenomena detailed above. Thus, if there is one general category of MP phenomena which subsumes even just CDs and CIs then it must allow for flexibility with respect to the open-texturedness of non-at issue, higher-order content.

Another respect in which there may be heterogeny among the MP ranks concerns speaker orientation. As mentioned above at Sect. 2.3, Potts (2005) builds speaker-orientation into his definition of a CI. One of Potts' paradigmatic examples is the following:

[36] Sheila believes that Chuck, a convicted psychopath, is fit to watch the kids.

The supplement in this case is clearly speaker-oriented, in that the sentence would normally be interpreted as saying that the speaker believes that Chuck is a convicted psychopath, not as saying or implying that Sheila so believes. Again, Potts establishes that there is precedent for this criterion in Grice's work (Potts 2005, Chap. 2)—even though it is no explicit part of Grice's conception of a CI, that may be because of Grice's exclusive attention on monoclausal utterances (cf. footnote 14). While it is arguable that both expressives and supplements are speaker-oriented in this way (Potts 2005, Chaps. 4–5), it is rather clear that the Frege-Grice classics do not satisfy this criterion (Chap. 7).

However, Potts' views on the speaker-orientation of expressives and supplements have met with considerable counterargument (cf., e.g., Bach 2007; Amaral et al. 2007). Taking these criticisms into account, it is not clear that speaker-orientation is suited to do any rigorous theoretical work. To illustrate, consider Bach's (2007, p. 495) claim that: "If you say 'That blasted TV isn't working' and I report you as having said that your blasted TV isn't working, I am not reporting you as having cursed it—I am cursing it myself". I, well, challenge and deny this too (cf. footnote 38). I could either be cursing it myself, or reporting you as having cursed it. (I will come back to this case in the discussion of the CVMP theory below.) My view is that we can and should simply not mention speaker-orientation in the definition of an MP phenomenon, and let those chips fall where they may.[39] There is still, quite plausibly, a semantic natural kind being stalked here, even though it may not be as homogenous and well-behaved as Potts (2005, 2007, 2008) holds CIs to be.

4.2 Contextual variability

Quite generally, MP phenomena seem to instance a certain sort of contextual variability, which is nicely articulated by Neale (1999):

> We do not seek to transmit information *only* about the world; communication may also involve the transmission of information about our attitudes and emotions [about this world-directed information] (p. 60). We need, I believe, quite generally to distinguish between ground-floor speech acts and those speech acts built upon the ground floor, which may or may not be commentaries on the

[39] I was all the more firmly convinced of this—albeit somewhat inadvertently—in Claire Horisk's session at the 2009 Pacific APA entitled "Conventional Implicature and Strong Speaker Orientation".

> ground-floor speech act, and which may or may not carry the primary conversational burden … (p. 61). In certain circumstances, … one proposition carries more conversational weight than the other (p. 63).

Especially the last sentence cited is important, because it complicates the very idea that, in general, it makes sense to identify any one proposition as the at-issue or ground-floor content. Consider again the case of [2], as factored out below:

[2] I have to look after Cindy's damn dog while she's away.
[2a] I have to look after Cindy's dog while she's away.
[CI] I am negatively inclined toward having to look after Cindy's dog.

If [2] is said in response to "Why are you going to Cindy's house?", then [2a] is likely to be the at-issue ground-floor content while the [CI] is color commentary. However, if [2] is said in response to "Why are you upset?", then the [CI] is playing more of an at-issue, ground-floor role. In this latter case, my negative inclinations are also integrally at issue, and not just thrown in for added color.

So, CIs are contextually variable in that it is highly context-dependent precisely which of the multiple propositions in the air is at-issue. Each of the other varieties of CI discussed above also instances this sort of contextual variability:

[12] He is an Englishman; *therefore* he is brave.
[16] *Frankly*, I am unmoved by your request.
[17] Are *n't* wolves carnivorous?
[37] Kent complained that his *blasted* TV isn't working.

That is, one can imagine a context in which [12] is used to express the ground-floor conjunction, while the [CI] is just an unquestioned background presumption; and one can imagine a contrastive context in which the ground-floor conjunction is obviously conceded by all parties, but it is the [CI] that is at issue. Similarly for [16], [17], etc. As for [37], again (cf. Sect. 4.1), the distinctive open texture in this case is that (it seems completely clear to me that) [37] would be perfectly appropriate, regardless of whether it is Kent or the reporter who cursed the TV. (Note further that the phenomenon described in footnote 34 seems to be extremely well-fitted to a CVMP analysis.)

Now, this applies less smoothly to supplements or CDs; though, again, one can imagine rare contexts in which what is at-issue is the auxiliary nominal, not the classifying predicate. (See the above discussion of the color test, as well as notes 36 and 38.) In general, then, this contextual variability is prevalent among MP phenomena.

4.3 CVMP theories

Contextual variability points to important refinements, when it comes to questions about the truth-conditional relevance of the multiple propositions. One instance of this sort of question is the aforementioned dispute between Grice (1975) and Bach (1999), over whether what [12] semantically expresses should be classified as true or false in a context of evaluation in which the relevant individual is both English and brave but the relevant CI is false. There are similar disputes for the case of CDs—i.e., over whether what is semantically expressed by [1] should be classified as true or false

in a context in which the referent *is* for dessert but *is not* a cake.[40] Those who take contextual variability seriously (such as Neale 1999, 2001; Dever 2001; Potts 2005) reject the presumption that this kind of question admits of an answer. You have only gone halfway toward MP theorizing—you are still in the grip of pre-revolutionary thinking—if you still think a sentence containing an MP phenomenon has exactly one truth-condition.

To the contrary, since the relative communicative weights of the various semantically expressed propositions can vary, one cannot, in general, specify a truth-condition for a sentence containing an MP phenomenon. (Thus, Grice (1975) and Bach (1999) are each right about a distinct proper subset of the cases; similarly for the disputants concerning the truth-conditions for 'This F is G'.) Metaphysically speaking, the relative weights of the various propositions depend on the speaker's intentions (cf. footnote 7). From an epistemic point of view, the sorts of cues a hearer relies on in divining speakers' intentions are vast and variable—including the sorts of calculations that are involved in identifying a pragmatic implicature, and indeed the entire grab-bag of interpretative skills (or of "wit, luck, and wisdom", in Davidson (1986) terms) that are involved in making sense of non-linguistic behavior.

I will call the MP theorists who take contextual variability seriously (such as Neale, Dever, and Potts) 'CVMP theorists'. In general, according to CVMP theorists, the relative conversational weights of the various semantically expressed propositions can vary (depending on the speaker's intentions), and so sentences involving MP phenomena need not have a determinate truth-condition. This is neither vagueness nor ambiguity. Rather, this is an instance of the ubiquitous flexibility of language. Linguistic meanings provide a context-independent framework for our creative communicative use; they are malleable—relative to, and as mandated by, the context of utterance.[41]

5 The relevance of MP theorizing to some current disputes in the study of language

To a large extent, the history of twentieth-century philosophy of language is a series of detections of oversimplifications in traditional presumptions about language, and, subsequently, a series of more sophisticated accounts in which those oversimplifications are rectified. For example, Frege (among many others) seems to have thought that concepts cannot be vague, so that what seems to be a vague concept must turn out to be either not vague after all or not a concept after all; famously, Wittgenstein

[40] See Glanzberg and Siegel (2006, §2) for discussion and references.

[41] For relevant and illuminating discussions of the malleable nature of linguistic meanings see Neale (2001, pp. 140, 159, 164, 168–169) and Recanati (2004, Chap. 9). The astute reader may well be currently entertaining notions that the CVMP theorist is tending toward Recanati (2004) contextualism. However, while CVMP theorists and contextualists do have some common enemies (e.g., they both reject old-school literalism, as characterized by Recanati (2004, pp. 1–4)), they do not see eye-to-eye on many fundamental issues. (Briefly, contextualists think that the truth-conditions of sentences are systematically under-determined, whereas CVMP theorists think that (there are cases in which) the truth-conditions of sentences are systematically over-determined.) As I will explain below, whereas contextualists seek to radically overhaul the traditional S/P divide, CVMP theorists just seek to refine it.

(1951) takes Frege to task on this point.[42] Today there are a wide variety of sophisticated accounts of the semantics of vagueness. Similar stories could be told about such phenomena as indexicality and context-sensitivity, which for decades were treated as occasional oddballs which deserved no more theoretical attention than vague gestures at pragmatics, but are now recognized as thoroughly prevalent and deeply significant properties of natural language. The move to MP theorizing may well turn out to be one more instance of transcending an oversimplification, with the resultant effect of a more sophisticated understanding of the workings of natural language.

In terms of the general theoretical significance of MP theorizing, it has the potential to have significant impact on certain disputes at the S/P border, which, in turn, underlie many current debates both within and beyond the study of language (see footnote 3). Quite generally, as we have seen, especially CVMP theorizing has some promise to afford an unprecedentedly nuanced and flexible picture of semantic content. Consequentially, MP theorizing is especially useful for those who are inclined to resist the incursions into semantic territory by the hordes of iconoclastic rebels, flooding in over the border from the relatively lawless domain of pragmatics. MP theorizing is a potential boon to those who oppose radical contextualism, and the very ideas of "truth-conditional pragmatics" or "pragmatic meanings". Since MP theorizing has the potential to greatly multiply one's semantic resources, it thereby promises a plenitude to be explored and exploited in addressing some of the challenges to the traditional conception of the S/P distinction.

For one thing, the CVMP interpreter is not the rigid, inflexible machine which is associated with some old-school conceptions of the philosophy of language. Rather, CVMP theorists recognize that interpretation is a vast and varied art, involving complex interplay between many different kinds of knowledge and skill. So, the CVMP theorist is not troubled by one line of attack on traditional conceptions of the S/P divide—running through such divergent strands as Davidson (1986), Sperber and Wilson (1986), and Chomsky (1993)—which go some way toward undermining the idea that semantic competence is a distinctive phenomenon which plays the vastly largest role in the process of interpreting everyday linguistic exchanges. As we have seen, CVMP theory is explicitly designed to absorb these challenges, while retaining a recognizably traditional conception of the semantic enterprise.

Another—related, but distinct—line of attack on traditional conceptions of the S/P divide is focused on semantic underdetermination. The idea here is that propositional content is generally and systematically underdetermined by the semantic properties of the relevant linguistic expressions. One case in point is the case of free enrichment (mentioned above in Sect. 1.2) wherein hearers take the proposition expressed by 'She took out her key and opened the door' to specifically include that she opened the door *with the key*. Many theorists believe that this kind of (creative, supplementary, and allegedly extra-semantic) interpretive process is the norm, not the exception, in

[42] Frege (1979, p. 195): "For a given concept, every object must fall under it or not, tertium non datur." Wittgenstein (1951, §71): "One might say the concept 'game' is a concept with blurred edges.—'But is a blurred concept a concept at all?'—… Is it even always an advantage to replace an indistinct picture with a sharp one? Isn't the indistinct one often always exactly what we need? … Is it senseless to say 'Stand roughly there'? …"

normal communicative exchanges. Consider, for example, 'John finished Sally's book'. Even given that this simple, mundane sentence is neither vague nor ambiguous, still there is an indefinite number of distinct propositions that (relative to a context) it could express. (For example: John finished reading the book that Sally recommended for their book club; John finished binding the book that Sally has written; John finished writing the book that was dedicated to Sally; etc.)

From Wittgenstein (1951), to Travis (1975) and Searle (1978), to Recanati (2004), many influential theorists have thought that semantic underdetermination is thoroughly prevalent, and that recognizing its prevalence drastically undermines the traditional division of interpretive labor along the S/P divide. However, to the contrary, [i] considerations pertaining to underdetermination hardly support categorical skepticism about the very idea of context-independent semantic properties, and [ii] to the extent that context-independent semantic properties still play a central role in interpretation, then the traditional S/P divide is just refined, not undermined. Given those points, CVMP theories are eminently worth further exploration.

[i] Not even radical contextualists deny that linguistic expressions have context-independent semantic properties; rather, what they insist is that no more substantive content can be given to context-independent literal meanings than "semantic potentials" (cf., e.g., Recanati 2004, pp. 97, 152). Now, to be sure, this is a bold departure from many traditional conceptions of the semantic enterprise, since a semantic potential "only determines a concept against a rich pragmatic context" (ibid, p. 97). However, even on this view, a recognizably traditional terrain for semantic theorizing is marked off. Down this avenue, the proper moral of semantic underdetermination is that linguistic meanings are much more flexible than traditionally conceived, that meanings are malleable—relative to, and as mandated by, the context of utterance.[43] As we have seen, that is a conclusion with which CVMP theorists are thoroughly comfortable. On the CVMP approach, linguistic meanings provide context-independent recipes which speakers and hearers are constantly molding to suit their ever-shifting communicative needs and interests.

[ii] Further, for lots of reasons, we still need this recognizably traditional, though refined, conception of the semantic enterprise. We need to invoke context-independent semantic properties to account for, in Perry's (1988, p. 175) terms, "what we seek to preserve when we communicate with others in different contexts". We need a recognizably traditional S/P divide to make sense of the very idea of non-literal usage or pragmatic implicature, not to mention more fundamental considerations about learnability or systematicity.[44]

[43] See the end of Sect. 4.3 above. And so, for example, the context-independent semantic content of 'John finished Sally's book' is that John finished (doing something or other to, from a limited range of salient options) a book which stands in some (one out of a limited range of salient options) relation to Sally. This sentence, like any other, is semantically fitted for a broad range of jobs, relative to different contexts of utterance. (Compare the discussion of 'Cindy's damn dog' in Sect. 4.1, or of 'but' in Bach (1999, §2).)

[44] Recanati (2004) presses the case that the old-school notion of literal meaning does not play a psychologically realized role in various sorts of communicative interactions; but as Bach (2005, 2006, and other places) urges, that does not undermine its cogency or worth in a rational reconstruction, or in a theoretical description of semantic competence. See footnote 8.

So, as with the cases of vagueness and indexicality, semantic underdetermination prompts the revision and refinement of the semantic enterprise, but hardly suggests or entails that the semantic enterprise is irredeemably confused or infertile. Given that the CVMP promises a wealth of resources to be further mined and explored, toward the end of this required more nuanced and sophisticated picture of semantic content, on the whole, the CVMP approach seems eminently worth further exploration.

To sum up: I have surveyed some grounds for thinking that MP theorizing is an illuminating and worthwhile research program. If so, it should be of considerable intrinsic interest to all who are interested in language. Further, those who hold that the moral of the contextualist challenge is that the traditional S/P distinction should be refined, rather than rejected or radically overhauled, are likely to find CVMP theorizing instrumentally quite attractive and useful.

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