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ON RÉCANATI'S AVAILABILITY PRINCIPLE[1]

SOBRE O PRINCÍPIO DE ACESSIBILIDADE DE RÉCANATI

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ABSTRACT:
In this paper I argue that François Récanati's Availability Principle for determining what is said is marred by the assumption of a questionable view of consciousness and a faulty analogy with perception.
Key-words: Récanati. *What is said.* Pragmatics. Consciousness.

RESUMO:
Neste artigo sustento que o Princípio de Acessibilidade de Récanati para determinar o que é dito está minado pela suposição de um conceito problemático de consciência e uma defeituosa analogia com a percepção.
Palavras-chave: Récanati. *O que é ditto.* Pragmática. Consciência.

Introduction

For many years now, François Récanati has argued for a distinction between two types of pragmatic utterance interpretation processes, "primary" and "secondary" processes, on the basis of conscious availability. Primary pragmatic processes are processes that are supposed to operate on a subpersonal (unconscious) level, whereas secondary processes are said to operate on a personal (conscious) level. Récanati mentions reference assignment to indexicals ("saturation") and disambiguation as examples of primary processes; examples of secondary pragmatic processes are the identification of what is said and what is implicated.[3]

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[3] The saying/implicating distinction originates in the work of H.P. Grice. Grice Grice (1975/1989) introduced a distinction between what is said by a speaker who assertively utters a sentence and what is "implicated" by him in using the sentence. What is said by a speaker, according to Grice, is "closely related to the conventional meaning of the words (the sentence) he has uttered" (p. 25); it is determined "in virtue of the particular meanings of the elements of [the sentence], their order, and their syntactic character" (p. 87). As currently used, the term "what is said" refers to the

The conscious/unconscious distinction and the corresponding distinction between primary and secondary processes play a central role in Récanati's theory of what is said, and motivate his main methodological principle for determining what is said, the Availability Principle (AP). According to the AP, "[W]hat is said must be consciously available to the interpreter... [W]hat is said must be intuitively accessible to the conversational participants" (Récanati, 2004, p. 17 and p. 20). I quote the version from (Récanati, 2004), but the AP has appeared in pretty much the same terms in earlier writings.

On the basis of the AP, Récanati has argued against various "minimalist" views of what is said. According to minimalism, what is said is strictly a function of the syntax and literal meaning of the sentence (including the saturation of indexicals and disambiguation of ambiguous expressions). Such a view is minimalist because it keeps the consideration of contextual extra-linguistic factors to a minimum. Any and all contextual effects on the sentence's truth conditions are supposed to be marked in syntax. Minimalism about what is said is probably tacitly assumed by most philosophers of language, but Borg (2004), Cappelen and Lepore (2005), Salmon (2004), and Stanley (2000), among others, expressly defend it.

Against minimalism, Récanati argues that such a "minimal proposition"[4], licensed solely by syntax and literal meaning, is never consciously available to communicators. A minimal proposition, if it makes sense to speak of such a thing at all, is for him merely a theoretical artifact; perhaps it could be viewed as a stage in a reconstruction of the understanding process, but certainly not as the final product of this process or what the interlocutors in a given situation would say is the message that has been literally transmitted by the utterance and may be evaluated as true or false. Minimalism, in other words, is ruled out by the AP; and indeed, the AP may be seen as the cornerstone of Récanati's original position within the spectrum of anti-minimalist or "contextualist" views. (Up until [Récanati, 2004] Récanati used the label "contextualism" to describe the position he favors, but in more recent writings — see, e.g., [Récanati, 2011] — Récanati has opted for the term "truth-conditional pragmatics.")

proposition, thought, or truth-conditional content expressed by a sentence uttered in a conversation. "What is implicated", or an implicature, is then the proposition(s) inferred from the saying of the utterance together with Grice's Cooperative Principle and Maxims of Conversation. See Grice (1975/1989) for his classic explanation of how different implicatures may be generated or understood in a conversation.

[4] The term "minimal proposition" was originally introduced by Récanati (1989, p. 304).

Given the importance of the AP in Récanati's theorizing, and its acceptance and use by other authors, the evidence that has so far been put forward in its favor is remarkably meager. Récanati offers just two sorts of justification for the AP: his own intuitions regarding a number of sample sentences exhibiting some form of semantic underdetermination (examples of this phenomenon will be discussed below) and an analogy between utterance understanding and perception.

In this paper, my aim is to examine critically the AP, focusing particularly on one of the justifications Récanati offers for it, namely, the analogy with perception. We will not consider the first sort of evidence in favor of the AP, intuitions, since the topic of intuitions in philosophy is just too broad, and a discussion of it would take us too far afield[5].

I will argue that the AP is untenable due to two problems. One problem, identified by Robyn Carston (2003), is that primary processes may indeed be on occasion consciously available, contrary to what Récanati says. This problem is a consequence of a second, bigger, problem with the AP: the principle seems to presuppose a questionable view of conscious availability. In (2004) and other writings, Récanati says relatively little about consciousness, but his thinking on it may be gleaned from his discussion of the analogy between utterance understanding and perception, an analogy that, I will show, is simply incorrectly formulated.

The discussion is organized as follows. In §1, two separate claims that are run together in Récanati's Availability Principle are distinguished. Both claims are problematic, though for different reasons. In §2, I examine the analogy with perception and the view of consciousness it presupposes. I also discuss what I consider to be a more plausible view of the sort(s) of consciousness involved in verbal exchanges. In §3, I consider, in light of the discussion of the previous two sections, the objection of Carston (2003). §4 offers some concluding remarks.

[5] I will only say this regarding the appeal to intuitions to support the AP: it's no good to try to justify the AP on the basis of our intuitions concerning the sentences and scenarios Récanati describes, for the AP, considered as a claim about communicators' intuitions, is presumably a generalization founded on the instances in which Récanati or I or any communicator has consulted his or her intuitions about what is said. Such intuitions in turn cannot be invoked to justify the AP; to do so would be to beg the question.

1. The Availability Principle: Two Claims

Although Récanati talks about *the* Availability Principle, what he refers to by that name are really two logically distinct claims. The first claim is that what is said by an uttered sentence in a conversational situation is to be identified with what communicators intuitively understand to have been said. ("What is said' must be analysed in conformity to the intuitions shared by those who fully understand the utterance" [Récanati, 2004, p. 14]) Call that the *Intuitions Claim* (IC). The second claim is that what is said is (or "must be") consciously available to communicators. ("[W]hat is said must be consciously available to the interpreter" [p. 17].) Call that the *Consciousness Claim* (CC). Sometimes the two claims appear in an amalgamated form, as in the statement I quoted in the second paragraph of the paper. The two claims are obviously closely related: the IC presupposes or implies the CC. That is to say, communicators can be said to understand and report intuitions concerning what is said only if what is said is consciously available to them in the first place. Despite their close connection, however, it is important to realize that the two claims are distinct.

The IC is a substantive claim because it is in effect a testable empirical hypothesis about the information understood by normal[6] communicators in normal[7] face-to-face conversations. It predicts that what normal speakers understand in normal conversational situations is what is said in the pragmatic sense (i.e. content that is in various ways pragmatically constituted — more on this below), and not a minimal proposition. As evidence for the IC, Récanati appeals to his intuitions regarding various examples of semantic underdetermination and also suggests that experiments similar to Geurts's (2002) concerning donkey sentences could be carried out as a way of confirming the AP (Récanati, 2004, pp. 15-16). In fact, there have been a number of attempts to find out the information communicators judge to be said (as opposed to what they judge to be implicated) by the saying of sentences containing different targeted expressions[8].

[6] Here I simply follow Récanati in assuming that a normal communicator "knows which sentence was uttered, knows the meaning of the sentence, knows the relevant contextual facts (who is being pointed to, and so on)" (Récanati, 2004, p. 20).

[7] Let's suppose a face-to-face conversation is "normal," if the conversational participants are normal and the language they are using is flowing with few interruptions due to misunderstandings, qualifications, or ignorance of the language or the context (broadly construed).

[8] See, e.g., Gibbs & Moise, (1997), Papafragou & Musolino (2003) and Carston (2008).

Most critics of the AP are really objecting to the IC. Some, like Manuel García-Carpintero (2001), have argued that the sorts of intuitions Récanati has in mind are not "heuristically of a scientific character" (García-Carpintero, 2001, p. 123), and therefore inadequate from a methodological point of view. Kent Bach (2001, 2002, 2006) also has complained that these "seemingly semantic intuitions" would be revised if subjects were presented with a richer sample of sentences and scenarios of utterance. If presented with a better sample of sentences and scenarios, he suggests, communicators would discern the properly truth-conditional content of an utterance from its pragmatic trappings, and would identify that content as what is said. Whatever the worth of these methodological arguments, it is clear that those who have put them forth have the IC in mind. As I indicated in §1, I will not weigh in on these matters here.

The CC, on the other hand, is a rather trivial claim, in the sense that it says nothing very specific about the nature of what is said: it is merely a proposed constraint on *any* characterization of what is said. The CC is prima facie compatible with the minimalist claim that the minimal proposition is what is said, since — for all we know — the minimal proposition might turn out to be consciously available. In fact, Bach says that what is said in the strict semantic sense is "consciously accessible" (Bach, 2001, p. 14). For Bach, however, "what is said in the strict semantic sense" isn't necessarily content that is fully propositional; he is of the view that what is said is sometimes only a "propositional radical" (Bach, 1994, p. 269). The CC merely expresses that communicators are (capable of being) conscious of propositions when they communicate verbally. It is consonant with the idea, expressed by Grice, and endorsed by Récanati, that linguistically conveyed meaning is essentially public and overt.

Again, the CC says that what is said—the truth-conditional content or proposition expressed by the sentence uttered by a speaker—is consciously available. Thus, the CC essentially involves two notions: the notion of a proposition and the notion of consciousness. So how does Récanati understand these two notions? Momentarily setting aside this question, and also the further question of which account of these notions is to be preferred, we should note at this point that the CC would seem to rest on the following two obvious and uncontroversial observations:

1. People are conscious beings (i.e. they have [or can be in] mental states that are conscious).

2. People communicate thoughts (propositions, truth-conditional content) through language.

Admittedly, 2 appears a bit more open to question than 1 — since it involves the technical notion of a proposition — but it is generally taken for granted in philosophy, linguistics, and cognitive science. 2, it would seem, is the absolute starting point of any discussion on linguistic communication and what it is that is communicated. So I will just assume that it is true in what follows. The CC, then, combines 1 and 2, for it says that the thoughts people communicate through language are in conscious mental states.

The reason minimalism conflicts with the AP, interpreted as the CC, is that the minimal proposition that is supposed to be generated or licensed by the syntactic structure plus the meaning of a sentence is, in the case of many sentences, an incomplete proposition or just the wrong proposition in the context. The minimal proposition, Récanati emphasizes, is not something the interlocutors are ever aware of.

Consider the sentence “Maria finished the novel”, for example. Uttered in one context, the sentence “Maria finished the novel” expresses the proposition *that Maria finished* ***writing*** *the novel*; in another context, it expresses the different proposition *that Maria finished* ***reading*** *the novel*; in yet another it expresses the third proposition *that Maria finished* ***editing*** *the novel* etc. The sentence can be used to convey a variety of contextually determined propositions that are all apparently sanctioned by its syntactic structure and the literal meaning of its constituent words.

Here is a second example from Searle (1980): consider the following sequence of rather ordinary English sentences, all containing the word “cut”:

[3] Bill cut the grass.

[4] The barber cut Tom’s hair.

[5] Sally cut the cake.

[6] I just cut my skin.

[7] The tailor cut the cloth.

…

The feature of this list which interests me for present purposes, and which I will try to explain is this. Though the occurrence of the word “cut” is literal in utterances of [3]-[7], and

though the word is not ambiguous, it determines different sets of truth conditions for the different sentences. The sort of thing that constitutes cutting the grass is quite different from, e.g., the sort of thing that constitutes cutting a cake. One way to see this is to imagine what constitutes obeying the order to cut something. If someone tells me to cut the grass and I rush out and stab it with a knife, or if I am ordered to cut the cake and I run over it with a lawnmower, in each case I will have failed to obey the order. That is not what the speaker meant by his literal and serious utterance of the sentence (p. 221-3).

As Searle suggests, manifold unstated facts and assumptions (what he calls "the Background") about the various activities we call "cutting" seem to play a role in the identification of the different truth-conditional contents that would be expressed by utterances of [3]-[7]. They do so in ways that circumvent traditional semantic explanation, since "to cut", like "to finish" in our first example, is not ambiguous or traditionally viewed as context-sensitive.

To give a name to the phenomenon just illustrated, we may say that these expressions and the sentences that contain them are *semantically underdetermined*. The syntax and literal meaning of these expressions and the sentences that contain them on their own do not suffice to yield a definite proposition (or the proposition actually recovered by the communicators in the situation). Expressions of virtually all syntactic types (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, function expressions etc.) exhibit this sort of semantic underdetermination (where it should be clear that by "semantic" we mean "truth-conditional"), as the following examples demonstrate:

Noun phrases

(1) The table [in this room] is covered with books.

(2) We were playing baseball in the backyard [where the game we were playing bears little resemblance to the game of baseball as described by the Major League Baseball Rulebook].[9]

Verb phrases

(3) She opened the door [with a key].

(4) Alex is writing the list [on a laptop computer].

[9] This example is from Bezuidenhout (2002, p. 106).

Adjectives

(5) That catcher is talented [defensively].

(6) Sam is ready [to go on stage].

Adverbs

(7) Chris is merely a good goalie [as opposed to having a striker's athleticism].

(8) Pat dresses stylishly [for a grad student].

Prepositional phrases

(9) The cat is on the mat [attached by thin wires in a zero-gravity environment, as in Searle's (1979) example].

(10) John is waiting for us at the post office [outside, saving a parking spot for us while we drive around the block].

Logical connectives/Function words

(11) He's not [what I'd call] a shrink, he's a psychiatrist.

(12) Paul and Mary got married and [then] had children.[10]

Each of these sentences is perfectly well-formed and meaningful as it stands. Yet it would appear that it is only when the sentences are uttered in contexts where the bracketed information is supplied — against a Background of appropriate facts and assumptions — that they have the truth-conditions the communicators in the context would say they have or that they have any truth conditions at all. That is to say, without this Background, the truth conditions of most of these sentences seem indeterminate, or are simply not the truth conditions the hearers would intuitively give for them.

Récanati is right that such examples constitute a prima facie challenge for the minimalist view that meaning plus syntax suffice to determine truth conditions. It is not clear that a single comprehensive strategy can succeed in explaining such widespread truth-conditional

[10] These last two examples are from Bach (2006). For a helpful discussion on the semantics and pragmatics of "and", see Carston (2002, Ch. 3).

underdetermination from a minimalist point of view[11]. To date, perhaps the most sophisticated attempt has been carried out by Stanley (2000; 2002a; 2002b; Stanley & Szabó, 2000; King & Stanley, 2004). Stanley's proposed solution to the underdetermination problem would treat the various types of semantically underdetermined expressions on the model of indexical expressions such as pronouns and demonstratives, which are well-understood vehicles of contextual input. The gist of Stanley's proposal is that associated with each seemingly underdetermined expression there are hidden variables getting their values from the context. Stanley has worked out his account in detail only in the case of NPs, however. He suggests that the account can be extended to cover other types of expression. Nevertheless, there are reasons not to share Stanley's optimism, as even the fullest version of his proposal, concerning NPs, is fraught with difficulties[12]. Here we cannot stop to consider Stanley's work or its defects; I simply register my agreement with Neale (2004b, 2007), Bach (2006), and Récanati (2004) that any attempt along those lines is unsuccessful.

Going back to our first example, the sentence "Maria finished the novel", the minimalist would say that it possesses a context-invariant core of meaning that is propositional, namely the argumentally incomplete proposition *that Maria finished_ the novel*, where "_" indicates a slot in the structure of the lexical item TO FINISH that is contextually filled according to one's favorite account[13]. This minimal proposition is what is literally expressed by the sentence in every context in which it is uttered.

Récanati argues that such a minimal proposition is not psychologically real. According to him, the minimal proposition, though perhaps logically or theoretically distinguishable from the contextually determined proposition, is not psychologically so. Communicators aren't able to distinguish in their minds the proposition *that Maria finished writing the novel* from the proposition *that Maria finished_ the novel* in the way that they are able to distinguish *that Maria finished writing the novel* from the proposition *that Paris is the capital of France*, for example.

[11] See Bezuidenhout (2002) for a review and critique of treatments that focus solely on certain types of expression and that purport to explain the underdetermination problem on the basis of notions like non-literality, ambiguity, vagueness, polysemy, incompleteness, or ellipsis.

[12] For criticisms of Stanley's strategy, see Bezuidenhout (2002), Récanati (2002), Rett (2005), Collins (2007) and Neale (2007). In evaluating Stanley's approach, it is helpful to keep Neale's warning in mind: "we shouldn't get hooked on aphonics." (2004b, p. 188)

[13] "_" here is simply intended to mark the fact that "to finish" is semantically incomplete; it is not to be confused with the function and variable Stanley (2000) hypothesizes are hidden in the structure of TO FINISH, nor with the "unarticulated constituent" (the semantic value contextually assigned to an argument-place that is also contextually provided), which in Récanati's account is supplied by the process of "free enrichment" (Récanati, 2002, 2004).

This is to be expected, Récanati would say, since the minimal proposition *that Maria finished_ the novel* is not an externalized representation, a finished propositional content, but — if it exists at all — merely describes of an aspect of the production/understanding of an utterance of "Maria finished the novel". On this understanding, then, a minimal proposition is an aspect of the communicator's implicit linguistic competence; it cannot be the object of conscious thought. Whatever Récanati's position might be on the ontology of propositions (we will not be concerned with this issue here), it is clear that for him, *if* they are indeed propositions, i.e. contents evaluable for truth and falsity, they must be consciously available; this is what the AP dictates. In the next section we turn to the matter that most interests us here, Récanati's construal of conscious availability.

2. Consciousness and the Analogy with Perception

As noted in §1, Récanati offers very little by way of an explicit justification of the AP, apart from appealing to an analogy with perception. Citing Brentano, Récanati says that perceptions have a dual character: in the case of a visual perception, for example, one sees something, but one is also conscious of the fact that one is seeing it. In the same way, he argues, the understanding of what is said possesses a dual character: one is conscious of what is said and also of the fact that the speaker has said it:

> [L]ike the visual experience, the locutionary experience possesses a dual character: we are aware both of what is said, and of the fact that the speaker is saying it. In calling understanding an *experience*, like perception, I want to stress its conscious character. (Récanati, 2004, p. 16)

There are two problems with the analogy, however. First, it seems to me that Récanati misstates it. If (in making the "Brentanian" assumption that) when one sees something, one is also conscious of seeing that something, then what Récanati should have said is that when one understands what is said, one is also conscious of understanding (or thinking or saying) what is said. The two facts one should be conscious of are 1) what is said and 2) that one understands what is said. Not that the speaker is saying it. To be conscious of the fact that *the speaker* is

saying what he said is to be conscious of something else entirely. The phrase, "to be conscious of what is said and of the fact that the speaker is saying it" is ambiguous and may mean at least two different things:

A) That one is conscious of what is said and of the fact that the speaker has carried out the speech act of saying an English sentence; or

B) That one is conscious of what is said and of the fact that the speaker is emitting certain sounds — i.e. one has a (qualitatively conscious) auditory perception.

Whichever way the phrase is interpreted, the claim that one is always simultaneously conscious of what is said and the fact that the speaker said it isn't very plausible.

But in order to say why, I first need to discuss another problem with the analogy. A second and deeper problem is that the analogy presupposes a questionable view of phenomenal consciousness. Récanati seems to assume that all perceptual states are (not just qualitatively, but reflexively) conscious states; perception, for him, is reflexively conscious experience. ("The subject is aware both of what he sees, and of the fact that *he* is seeing it." [Récanati, 2004, p. 16, emphasis added.]) But this assumption is false. For one thing, it is possible to have less-than-fully-conscious perceptions, or "thin phenomenality", to use David Rosenthal's phrase.[14] Second,

[14] Rosenthal's (2002) distinction between "thin" and "thick" phenomenality corresponds to Peter Carruthers' (2000) distinction between "worldly subjectivity" and "experiential subjectivity." It can also be interpreted as a distinction between two kinds of "phenomenal consciousness" ("P-consciousness" or "phenomenality"), in Ned Block's (1997) terminology, or "lower-order qualitative character," in William Lycan's (1996) equivalent terminology. Here I will adopt Rosenthal's terminology, but solely out of convenience; Carruthers' terminology describes the same facts. I do think, however, that Rosenthal's distinction is a refinement of Block's coarser-grained notion of P-consciousness (and Lycan"s lower-order qualitative character), and thus to be preferred for our purposes. Rosenthal's distinction between thin phenomenality and thick phenomenality picks out facts that are glossed over by the notion of P-consciousness.

According to Rosenthal, thin phenomenality is "the occurrence of qualitative character without there also being something it is like for one to have that qualitative character" (Rosenthal, 2002, p. 657). Rosenthal (2002) mentions blindsight as an example of thin phenomenality. (The blindsight example was originally used by Block to motivate his distinction between P-consciousness and A(ccess)-consciousness.) As a result of damage to the primary visual cortex, blindsight patients report an inability to see objects that are presented to them. But, surprisingly, if asked to point to the object they say they cannot see, patients can somehow do so with a remarkable degree of accuracy. However, the blindsighters have no qualitative, "what it's like" experience of the objects. More pedestrian examples of thin phenomenality include the common experience of suddenly noticing a sound and realizing that it has been going on for some time (e.g., the sound of vehicle traffic while one is engaged in conversation) or having a persistent dull ache of which one is only intermittently conscious during the day; when occupied with other things, one's consciousness of the pain recedes.

even if the perception is conscious in the qualitative "what it's like" (or Rosenthal's "phenomenally thick" sense), that still doesn't mean that the subject is *conscious of himself as having the perception*. Not all perceptions possess a dual character; some perceptual states are phenomenally thin conscious states, and have no (qualitative) consciousness accompanying them, and some are qualitatively conscious but are not accompanied by (or are in) higher-order reflexive states (i.e. states that are also "about" oneself). There is simply no reason to suppose that such higher-order reflexive consciousness occurs in ordinary perceptual experience. Phenomenal consciousness is a matter of degrees.

Thus if Récanati's claim that "we are aware of what is said and of the fact that the speaker is saying it" is interpreted according to B, then the claim is probably false, since it is likely that we are conscious of the fact that the speaker produced certain sounds (and a host of other perceptually known facts of the situation) only in a phenomenally thin way, and not in a reflexively conscious way.

Cognitive consciousness is arguably a matter of degrees as well. When we think, read a text, or listen to and understand the utterances of our conversational partners, we entertain thoughts, there is "something it's like" to have the thoughts. Such thoughts are in qualitatively conscious mental states. On an analogy with thick phenomenality, let's call this kind of cognitive consciousness "thick cognitivity". Is there "thin cognitivity" as well? Can thinking and understanding occur in less-than-fully-conscious but not flat-out unconscious states? Probably. It seems reasonable to suppose that there are less-than-fully-conscious occurrences of language understanding. For instance, most of us probably have had the experience of momentarily spacing out or having our attention waver while reading or listening to someone, but still being able to play back (by orally repeating the utterance or "saying" it silently in our mind) the thought

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Thick phenomenality is "the subjective occurrence of mental qualities". Rosenthal says that thick phenomenality is just thin phenomenality plus "what it's like" or the qualitative character of having that thin phenomenality (e.g., actually becoming aware of the sound of vehicle traffic or of the pain) (p. 657). This is also a very minimal type of consciousness, however, and no "dual character" should be assumed to be an essential feature of phenomenally thick mental states. For instance, it's reasonable to suppose that many non-human animals at many moments of their lives have phenomenally thick mental states and hence that they are capable of having "perceptual experiences." It seems reasonable to suppose that there is something it's like for a bat to have the sonar perceptions of a bat, for example. Yet it seems unlikely that most non-human animals are either capable of intentional (conceptual) states such as belief states (if belief is understood in terms of the notion of a proposition, as it usually is) or of entertaining the higher-level reflexive representation of themselves as having the sensory perception (which might or might not have the form of a belief). The same point applies to the case of human infants and cognitively impaired adults.

expressed by the written or spoken sentence. Perhaps other, more exotic, examples of thin cognitivity would be subliminal advertising and hypnosis. As to reflexive cognitive consciousness, there's no quarrel regarding its existence: we can think (have the qualitatively conscious state) that P and be simultaneously (reflexively) conscious that we are thinking that P.

But it's unlikely that this is what happens every time we understand what is said by an utterance. As in the case of perception, it's implausible to suppose that in real-time (occurrent) face-to-face conversations, we are at once qualitatively conscious of what is said and reflexively conscious of the fact that we are qualitatively conscious of what is said, or else that we are qualitatively conscious of what is said and also qualitatively conscious of the second proposition *that the speaker said it [the proposition expressed by the sentence he said]*.

In other words, if Récanati's claim that "we are aware of what is said and of the fact that the speaker is saying it" is interpreted according to A, he'd be contending, implausibly, that the conscious cognitive episode of understanding what is said by the speaker's utterance is always attended, or is partly constituted by, a second cognitively conscious state containing the proposition *that the speaker said it [the proposition expressed by the sentence he said]*.

The right thing to say, I think, is that we are conscious of the fact that the speaker emitted certain sounds in a phenomenally thin way and that we are conscious of the fact that the speaker carried out the speech act of saying what he said by uttering a sentence in a cognitively thin way; these facts *could* become conscious in a higher-order way if for some reason we focused our attention on them, but in normal circumstances they remain in the background of our consciousness. In fact, we are probably thinly phenomenally conscious and thinly cognitively conscious of the great majority of the facts of the conversational situation and of the utterance of what is said. But in understanding what is said, or in entertaining a thought in general, these facts normally remain in the background—our focus is on what is said itself. The attendance of the higher-order conscious states that Récanati supposes are involved in understanding what is said would surely cause intolerable disruptions and blockage of the "normal language flow"[15].

[15] To use Millikan's (1984) phrase.

3. Carston's Objection to the AP[16]

Carston (2003) has exploited the coarse-grained character of the notion of consciousness presupposed by the AP to challenge the central role Récanati assigns to it within his framework. As mentioned in §1, in addition to being an argument against minimalism, the AP serves as a criterion for distinguishing between two types of pragmatic processes, primary and secondary pragmatic processes.

According to Récanati, primary processes such as saturation and "free enrichment" (the addition of contextual information to semantic information in ways that are not straightforwardly traceable to syntax) operate on a subpersonal level. We are not, for example, supposed to be conscious of the pragmatic assignment of a location, by free enrichment, to an unarticulated constituent in the content of an utterance of the sentence "It is raining," any more than we are of the semantic process that assigns a lexical meaning to the sounds making up the word "raining". (See [Récanati, 2002] for an in-depth discussion of this example). In a normal exchange, we simply understand the utterance to be about a contextually specified location, "in a flash."

In contrast, secondary pragmatic processes are "consciously available" (which means in this connection not just that they are reflexively conscious according to Récanati's understanding of the term "conscious," but also that they are capable of being worked out explicitly and step-by-step by communicators). In a given conversational situation, the utterance of "It is raining" may implicate the proposition *that the baseball game is likely to be postponed*, for example. In the context, communicators are supposed to be able to consciously access (in Récanati's reflexive way) what is said by the utterance (*that it is raining in the contextually specified location*), what is implicated by the speaker in saying the sentence (*that the baseball game is likely to be postponed*), and the inferential link between the two propositions. Récanati emphasizes, however, that in normal real-life conversations, secondary processes are almost never conscious in a strong "CEO" (conscious, explicit, and occurrent) sense; rather, they are consciously available only in the weak, dispositional sense that they are capable of being consciously and explicitly worked out by communicators. Récanati recognizes that understanding what a speaker has implicated is often

[16] Here I discuss only Carston's objection to the claim that secondary processes are consciously available but primary processes aren't. I will not be concerned with the much more comprehensive critique by Carston (2006) of Récanati's approach to what is said.

as intuitive and fast as understanding what she has said. Still, he says, the capacity for reflection is a "constitutive" precondition for the operation of secondary processes.

Carston objects that the AP does not provide the desired distinction between the two kinds of processes because communicators are in fact able to reflect on primary processes and make them explicit. (On the other hand, intuitive considerations, seemingly experimentally confirmed by Gibbs and Moise (1997), would seem to show that communicators are not usually aware of the difference between what is said and what is implicated, or of the inferential connection between them.) Carston gives the following example, which shows how someone would be able, upon reflection, to make explicit the saturation process of assigning a contextually provided value to the pronoun "he":

> [I]f asked how he knows that the speaker was referring to Tony Blair (rather than Cherie Blair or John Prescott), the addressee could respond that he knows this because the speaker used the word "he" while pointing at (or demonstrating in some other ostensive way) Tony Blair. He thereby shows that his referential hypothesis has a rational basis and that he is consciously aware of both the hypothesis itself, the evidence on which it is based and the relation (inferential?) between them, and that, on reflection, he is able to make the connection explicit (Carston, 2003, p. 2).

This example purports to show that the primary process of saturation can be made explicit (and thus must have been consciously available all along). Carston goes on to say that other primary processes, such as disambiguation and non-literal uses of words, can be made similarly explicit. Thus primary processes would seem to be in principle just as consciously available to communicators as secondary processes. As a result, Récanati's primary/secondary process distinction, based on the subpersonal/personal distinction, collapses.

Is Carston right? Well, I think it would be a bit imprecise to say that the example shows that a pragmatic *process* is consciously available. Depending on the view one prefers, the pragmatic processes postulated by contextualists may be construed as operating within a rather circumscribed cognitive environment (for example, only on linguistic representations, as in Récanati's account), or as interacting with all sorts of information (e.g. sensory information about the context and encyclopedic information that is both linguistic and non-linguistic in nature) represented in the subject's understanding (as proposed by Relevance theorists like Carston). But, on any view, the *kind* of linguistic representations the processes work with are internal ones,

undergoing various stages of completion. As such they are not psychologically real to communicators; they are not consciously available.

What Carston's example reveals is that communicators may be conscious in a "cognitively thin" way of many facts about the saying of a sentence, including the fact that a word (a token of "he," in this case) has been used to refer to an object in the context[17]. As I said above in §3, I would assume that typically communicators are (cognitively) qualitatively conscious of what is said by the sentence uttered,[18] but this of course doesn't mean that they aren't conscious in lower-level ways of many other facts about the utterance. Facts that are only conscious to them in a cognitively thin way may be brought to their attention; the example describes how this may be done.

Although it seems to me that Carston's objection technically misses its target, since strictly speaking pragmatic processes, like all cognitive processes, presumably operate at a level that is beyond phenomenological description, the larger point it makes is correct: to appeal to what is consciously available to communicators is not much help in distinguishing types of pragmatic processes, or in characterizing such processes. Instead, pragmatic processes are probably best characterized by the sort of internally represented information they take as input and by their interconnections with other cognitive processes of the mind[19].

Conclusion

I have argued that François Récanati's Availability Principle, his main criterion for determining what is said, is problematic because it is based on a reflexive view of consciousness that seems incorrect for most ordinary linguistic exchanges. Such an understanding of consciousness renders Récanati's distinction between primary and secondary pragmatic processes vulnerable to an objection by Robyn Carston, which notes that both processes can be conscious

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[17] We may be conscious in this thin way of the facts, for example, that that the sentence one heard belongs to a language one understands; that it has been said with a native speaker's pronunciation; that it is slightly ungrammatical because the speaker unwittingly used one preposition when he meant to use another; that it contains five words; and so on.

[18] "Typically" is intended to leave open the possibility that in certain — perhaps stereotypical — situations it is what is implicated and not what is said that is what communicators are qualitatively conscious of.

[19] Récanati still has the resources within his account to distinguish between primary and secondary processes. He can distinguish the two types of processes in terms of their scope of operation, for example. Primary processes, he says, operate "locally" (subpropositionally), while secondary processes operate "globally" (by taking whole propositions as input).

and hence that conscious availability cannot serve to demarcate the two. Though Carston's objection would fail to undermine Récanati's distinction if it were understood as a distinction about theoretical stages of language processing, it is a valid criticism given the way Récanati has in fact stated the distinction. Our discussion of her objection does suggest an important general conclusion: namely, that conscious availability is not a defining property of pragmatic processes, or points to a useful approach for discriminating between types of pragmatic processes.

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