

About the reviewer

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Katarzyna M. Jaszczolt, *Discourse, Beliefs and Intentions: Semantic Defaults and Propositional Attitude Ascription*, Oxford: Elsevier, 1999, xxii + 362 pages. ISBN 0-08-043060-0.

Reviewed by Alessandro Capone (University of Messina)

Discourse, beliefs and intentions by Jaszczolt is a tremendously interesting book in the phenomenological tradition, on the semantics/pragmatics debate in connection with the semantics of belief reports. Jaszczolt defends the idea of default interpretations of belief reports and expressions of belief and attempts to do away with ambiguities altogether (however granting the notion of interpretative ambiguity). Furthermore, she offers a picture of semantics in which semantics and pragmatics have peer status within the same semantic model (in other words pragmatics intrudes into semantics). She proposes, in connection with belief sentences, that the referential intention in its strong form secures the referent by its intrusion into semantic representation.

Jaszczolt focuses the reader on an extremely important consideration: while belief sentences, according to the standard treatments, give rise to distinct logical forms, one does not stop to compare these distinct logical forms and then arrives at the correct interpretation. One does not ponder on two or more logical forms in one's mind to make a decision as to the most plausible interpretation (see also the point made on p. 53). Usually there is only one interpretation and this is the default one. Thus, to consider an example, the sentence *She believes that the violin is in the parlour* will standardly be interpreted as if the speaker committed herself to the existence of the violin. The hearer will not ponder on the *de re* and the *de dicto* readings, comparing them, in the attempt to decide which is the most plausible interpretation. The referential intention is presumed to be the default one.

We have to agree with these essential data. Furthermore, Jaszczolt resorts to

a host of principles such as POL (Levels of senses are not to be multiplied beyond necessity), DI (Intentions come in various sizes), PI (The primary role of intention in communication is to secure the referent of the speaker's utterance) to demonstrate her points. I think that her considerations prove that pragmatic inferences are instantaneous and that one is not conscious of the pragmatic process taking place in the mind, that takes as input semantic representations and yields pragmatic inferences. Even if these inferences can be calculated by means of Gricean (or Relevance theoretic) arguments taking as input semantic representations and the Gricean maxims (or the principle of Relevance), and even if calculability is a crucial test for pragmatic inference, we cannot claim that the hearer of the message is aware of the fact that he has calculated them. The claim that he must have calculated them does not rest on data gleaned through introspection, but on the plausible deduction that, if the inferences are perceived and yet they were not part of the semantics, then they must have been calculated. However, at this point it is right to notice that setting up the semantics of a linguistic expression is generally a theoretical choice that takes into account the contexts where the default readings do not obtain. Thus, the claim that (some) pragmatic inferences are calculated (and this occurred in some remote recess of the mind which was inscrutable for the conscious part of the mind) rests on logical deduction which in turn rests on theoretical decision.

In practice, we have no data accessible through introspection that support this assumption. We could set up the semantics in a different way, by allowing it to capture the default inferences and by obtaining the right semantics for the contexts in which the default interpretations do not obtain by letting the contexts override the default semantics. This is what the author argues, although her claim must be qualified further by the fact that intentions intrude into semantics. The default semantics ensures that the correct interpretations obtain in the standard contexts, while in the specific contexts in which the default interpretations cannot hold, the alternative possible interpretations hold. This picture differs significantly from the standard picture of semantics. While in the standard theories semantics is enriched through contextual clues and pragmatics, which add extra features of meaning, in the converse picture unitary semantics is advocated and context plays a role in subtracting certain semantic features.

At this point, it might be worthwhile noting that Jaszczolt could have advocated a slightly different picture in which the default inferences related to the referential intention are not pragmatic in nature but semantic, semantics

having the further qualification of interacting with contexts in such a way that contexts could subtract features of meaning (in other words, the semantics could be overridden in certain contexts which would provide exceptions to the general semantic rules. Now, I want to make the supposition that such a conception could be plausibly put forward, albeit it would significantly differ from Jaszczolt's in one important aspect. This hypothetical picture, let us call it P1, would not mix arbitrary and non-arbitrary components of meaning, while it must be clear to the reader that Jaszczolt's semantics is such that intentions intrude into it, and, intentions being pragmatic components, they cannot be considered arbitrary elements of meaning. Thus, Jaszczolt's picture mixes arbitrary and non-arbitrary elements of meaning. Pragmatics (reduced to contextual effects) in P1 would only play a negative role, while in Jaszczolt's model it has a positive role in promoting default interpretations. However, it seems to me that, apart from a couple of explanations of the pragmatic processes involved, along the lines of Sperber and Wilson (1986:63, 175), the main pragmatic explanation rests on the role played by intentions. The referential intention is set up as default, in this view of semantics. Now, if this is the case, Jaszczolt's picture is sufficiently close to P1. Furthermore, in Jaszczolt's picture, context plays a negative role in explaining deviations from the default inferences. Comparison of Jaszczolt's picture with P1 is important because P1 makes evident the advantages of advocating default semantics. The purpose of it is to avoid the hardly plausible idea that inferences pertaining to the referential intentions are calculated by means of arguments.

As Jaszczolt's picture is sufficiently close to P1 it must have the same advantages. Of course the difference lies in the fact that the default inferences for Jaszczolt are still contributed by pragmatics; however pragmatics here must be intended as the presumption of the referential intention. A presumption need not be calculated — although it can be calculated following e.g., arguments based on work by Sperber and Wilson (1996). Although her approach to semantics is intrusionistic, Jaszczolt distinguishes her own approach from that of Levinson (2000) which proposes only partial intrusionism as semantics and pragmatics are “separate devices making distinctively different contributions to a common level of representation” (p. 71). I think that Jaszczolt, instead of rebutting Levinson's claim, actually raises some thorny problems for her theory. In fact, one of the advantages of classical semantic/pragmatic approaches such as Levinson (1983) is that one was able to distinguish between semantic and pragmatic inferences in terms of monotonicity, pragmatic inferences being non-monotonic. In Jaszczolt (1999) and in Levinson (2000) one is confronted

with definitions of truth-conditional semantics in terms of pragmatic intrusionism and, as a result of this move, one is not really able to define pragmatic inferences, since non-monotonic inference turns out to be involved both in truth-conditional meaning and in genuinely pragmatic inferences. Furthermore, one has the undesirable consequence that truth-conditional meaning is, due to pragmatic intrusionism, also made non-monotonic.

For Jaszczolt these might simply be definitional problems, although I would be inclined to think that these are severe definitional problems and that a more classical picture of semantics is required (probably complemented by considerations as in Carston 1999), as I argued in Capone (1997; 2000). This is probably the price to pay if one does not want to hold the classical picture and if one does not want to hold P1, which is similar to Jaszczolt's in some respects (it has the same advantages), but different in other respects. The definitional problem is not a minor one. How would one define pragmatic inferences on this approach? Defeasibility will not be sufficient since this will not distinguish between pragmatic inferences and entailments which can be suspended due to the principle of charity. Furthermore, defeasibility is not able to distinguish between ambiguity proper and pragmatic inference. Non-detachability is not reliable as a test either. Calculability would probably become crucial as a test, although we must remind the reader that Jaszczolt defends an approach in which pragmatic inferences obtain by default and are not really calculated. Calculability as a test would probably reduce in this theory to the abstract possibility of calculating a pragmatic inference, although it is not actually calculated (this would be somewhat different from Grice's view of the test). There is a problem inherent in this view, namely the fact that some pragmatic inferences are not only calculable in principle but must be calculated in practice (how often we ask ourselves: 'Why did the speaker utter sentence *p*?' and provide reasons for uttering *p*, ultimately concluding that perhaps it was *q* that the speaker intended). Thus the move would be too drastic and would, in fact, leave out of pragmatics perhaps the most interesting cases of pragmatic inferences.

There is no way out of this quandary but to accept Levinson's (1983) definition of pragmatics as the residue obtained by subtracting truth-conditions from meaning. This definition becomes circular if truth-conditional meaning is in turn defined as comprising pragmatics (the move made by Levinson 2000; Jaszczolt 1999). I am myself inclined to accept the picture of the semantics/pragmatics boundary drawn by Levinson (1983), because the problems posed by default inferences are minor with respect to the severe definitional problems we are confronted with if we embrace the new picture of semantics propounded

by Jaszczolt or Levinson (2000). Instantaneous pragmatic inferences may be short-circuited as Jaszczolt admits, in which case we account for the fact that they do not involve actual calculation. Alternatively, we might think of the internal mental processor as a very powerful computational device that yields default pragmatic inferences in no time.

Failing these possibilities we could resort to P1, which is sufficiently close to Jaszczolt's view and has all its merits while it probably does not retain the defects (such as the severe definitional problems I was talking about). It remains to be said that once P1 is employed for belief sentences, it will probably have to apply to all non-monotonic instantaneous inferences. This move would probably discard the bulk of neo-Gricean pragmatics, which is based on instantaneous inferences, but it will not discard pragmatics which would remain intact as far as particularized implicatures are concerned. It might also have the advantage of explaining notions such as the Disjoint Reference Presumption (Levinson 2000; Huang 2000), which are somewhat obscure. It remains to be seen whether P1, being the drastic move that it is, might be really palatable and immune to criticism. I want to point out, nevertheless, that the definitional problems I pointed out need not be insuperable, as Jaszczolt might distinguish between pragmatics1 (default inferences) and pragmatics2 (inferences that are the output of complex non-deductive arguments), a distinction which, I am persuaded, will at some stage force itself into our consolidated analyses. Alternatively, she might place a decisive weight on abstract calculability as the hallmark of pragmatic inferences. In this way no distinction between pragmatics1 and pragmatics2 might be needed and levels will not be multiplied without necessity.

Jaszczolt deals with the problem of the ambiguity of belief reports. Belief sentences are potentially ambiguous between the *de re* reading, the *de re about someone else* reading, and the *de dicto* reading. Jaszczolt actually proposes that we should deal with the *de re about someone else* reading as if it was a kind of *de dicto* reading, which she dubs the *de dicto1* reading. She argues that this kind of ambiguity cannot be properly captured by scope ambiguity because this, she says, cannot account for the *de dicto1* reading. Jaszczolt analyses Schiffer's (1995) analysis of belief reports in terms of modes of presentation (the way the reference is presented to the believer and to the reporter). While Schiffer actually says that modes of presentation are implicit elements of syntactic structure in belief sentences and belief reports, Jaszczolt, granting the importance of this analysis, actually says, probably in line with her parsimonious program, that the mode of presentation is irrelevant in the case of *de re* readings

and in the case of *de dicto* readings (actually, in these cases she talks of types of mode of presentation which are pragmatically motivated (p.155) — the type zero being relevant here). Instead, she thinks that a mode of presentation is linguistically relevant in the analysis of *de dicto* belief reports (p.156), as “the departure from the default triggers the increase of adicity”. She believes that the mode of presentation is irrelevant in the case of *de re* belief reports, since these are unproblematic assertions about beliefs held about an object or person that is intersubjectively known by the speaker and by the believer. Actually, Jaszczolt says that, in default of evidence to the contrary, the speaker of a belief report in uttering a belief report is understood as taking for granted that the hearer will assume that he and the believer share the same mode of presentation of the reference (p.128). Only in cases in which a *de dicto* belief report is uttered, the speaker will make it manifest to the hearer that he and the believer have different modes of presentation of the object involved. This practice is necessary because, otherwise, the hearer will falsely believe that the speaker and the believer have the same mode of presentation. This type of analysis along the lines of Schiffer and Jaszczolt will easily explain the famous Ortcutt problem. It simply will not do to replace *the man with a brown hat* with *Ortcutt* in *Ralph believes that the man with the brown hat is a spy* because the referent of both NPs presents himself to Ralph under two different modes of presentation in the two different occasions. Considering that a referential error is involved somehow, either in the first or in the second belief (report), this is exactly the case of *de dicto*, about which Jaszczolt says that the mode of presentation analysis is relevant and applicable.

Jaszczolt completes the picture of belief reports by arguing (and this argument is really plausible) that the alleged potential *de re/de dicto* ambiguity actually evaporates in conversation, as the default reading of a belief report is the *de re* reading. As usual, she integrates her persuasion about belief utterances into her intrusionistic semantic model, in which pragmatics is an indispensable component of semantic interpretation, although it is not considered as a distinct level. Her analysis of definite descriptions is also applied to proper names, which according to her, do not differ significantly from definite descriptions as both classes, together with pronouns, could be conflated within the category of referring expressions.

Summing up, Jaszczolt has challenged many tenets: a. the distinction of *de re/de dicto* readings in terms of scope distinctions; b. Schiffer’s theory on modes of presentation; c. the distinction between definite descriptions and proper names; d. the independence of separate levels of semantic and pragmatic

representation. One need not always assent to what she says. For example, when she says that scope distinctions cannot account for the *de dicto*1 reading, I guess that a stalwart opponent of Jaszczolt's theory would probably deny that *de dicto*1 is a category on its own and would probably assign it to the *de re* category, in which case scope distinctions are relevant. As far as Schiffer's modes of presentation are concerned, I was, while reading this piece of work, really fascinated by the kind of work modes of presentation do. In passing I would like to add that there might be different ways of dealing with the problem inherent in belief reports. For example, Stalnaker (1999) deals with the Orcutt puzzle solely in terms of a pragmatic analysis, which seemed to me to be impressive.

I believe that this is an extremely coherent and well-argued book. I am persuaded that the reader will find it rich in ideas and very instructive. I am also sure it will bear fruit in due time and have some very important ramifications. The reading of this book is like an adventure in unexplored areas of the mind. I will not say how this exploration ends, but I want to recommend this book wholeheartedly, because, whether or not we assent to everything she says, I am really persuaded that it has been written by a great author of our times.

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Katarzyna M. Jaszczolt (ed), *The Pragmatics of Propositional Attitude Reports*, Oxford: Elsevier, 2000, vii + 218 pages. ISBN 0–08–0436358.

Reviewed by Graeme Forbes (Tulane University)

Some of the papers in this collection are essentially replies to replies, and might have better appeared in the journals that hosted the original exchanges. Some of the others, which aim at greater substance, would have benefited from better refereeing. The volume costs \$97.00 US, which works out, excluding the editor's introduction, at just under \$11 per paper.

The first paper is Stephen Schiffer's "Propositional attitudes in direct reference semantics" in which Schiffer explains why "hidden indexical" theories (HIT's) of propositional attitude reports seem to him to be the best option for accommodating referential opacity (substitution failure) within the "direct reference" framework. In the latter framework, sentences which can be obtained from each other by substitution of co-referring constituents express the same proposition (so "Hesperus is Hesperus" expresses the same proposition as "Hesperus is Phosphorus"). So if attitude ascriptions simply report who takes what attitude to which propositions, our inclination to say that one can believe Hesperus is Hesperus and not believe Hesperus is Phosphorus looks like some kind of mistake. But if attitude ascriptions have embedded within them hidden indexicals whose references are sensitive to the words used to specify the proposition, substitution-failure becomes intelligible. The idea is crudely illustrated by a theory which construes, say, "Hammurabai doubts Hesperus is Phosphorus" as meaning: