Christopher Potts, *The logic of conventional implicatures* (Oxford Studies in Theoretical Linguistics **7**). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. Pp. xii + 246.

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Paul Grice warned that 'the nature of conventional implicature needs to be examined before any free use of it, for explanatory purposes, can be indulged in' (1978/1989: 46). Christopher Potts heeds this warning, brilliantly and boldly. Starting with a definition drawn from Grice's few brief remarks on the subject, he distinguishes conventional implicature from other phenomena with which it might be confused, identifies a variety of common but little-studied kinds of expressions that give rise to it, and develops a formal, multidimensional semantic framework for systematically capturing its distinctive character. The book is a virtuosic blend of astute descriptive observations and technically sophisticated formulations. Fortunately for the technically unsophisticated reader, the descriptive observations can be appreciated on their own.

Here is a quick summary of the book. Following a brief introductory chapter (so titled), chapter 2 makes 'A preliminary case for conventional implicatures' by offering a four-part definition, distinguishing conventional implicature (CI) from conversational implicature and presupposition, identifying the main kinds of linguistic phenomena that fit this definition, and motivating the book's distinctive multidimensional semantic framework. Chapter 3, 'A logic for conventional implicatures', develops a rigorous 'description logic' for representing CI-meanings along with 'at-issue' meanings. The next two chapters illustrate and discuss the two main kinds of expressions with CI-meanings. Chapter 4 focuses on 'Supplements', including nonrestrictive relative clauses, *as*-parentheticals, Noun Phrase appositives, and several sorts of adverbials; and chapter 5 considers 'Expressive content', including expressive attributive adjectives, epithets, and Japanese honorifics. Chapter 6, 'The supplement relation: a syntactic alternative', compares Potts's approach to supplements with an alternative syntactic approach, and argues that there is no need to complicate the syntax in order to distinguish supplement structures from coordination – the difference can be captured with multidimensional semantics. The seventh and last chapter, 'A look outside Grice's definition', briefly considers what sorts of linguistic phenomena do, or in principle could, arise when one or another of the four conditions in the definition of conventional implicature is not satisfied. The most important case of this involves words like

although, but, therefore, and *yet* – words of the very sort that traditionally, thanks to Grice (1975/1989) and originally to Frege (1892/1997, 1918/1997), have been thought to trigger conventional implicatures (although not by Potts).

Potts extracts a four-part definition from several brief remarks made by Grice in the course of distinguishing conversational from conventional implicature. Two of Potts's four conditions are straightforward and closely connected: conventional implicatures arise from conventional meanings of words (hence are not 'calculable' from conversational maxims), and they are not cancelable. Moreover, conventional implicatures are SPEAKER-ORIENTED commitments and, unlike presuppositions, are 'logically and compositionally INDEPENDENT of what is said (in [Grice's] favored sense), i.e., independent of the at-issue entailments' (11). These last two features of conventional implicatures, speaker orientation and independence, are the more interesting and controversial ones (note that Potts's independence condition replaces Grice's stronger condition (1975/1989: 25) that the falsity of a conventional implicature does not affect the truth of the entire utterance).

The case of supplements clearly illustrates these two features. Supplements are so called because they do not affect the content or truth-value of the material with which they combine. Syntactically, they belong to the same tree structure, but they do not have semantic effects on the proposition expressed by the main clause. They include non-restrictive relative clauses, *as*-parentheticals, and appositives, as illustrated in (1)–(3).

(1) Condi, who used to be provost at Stanford**,** is implacable.

(2) Cheney is, as Maureen Dowd has dubbed him**,** the Grim Peeper.

(3) Libby, the former aide to Cheney**,** can't be compared to Liddy.

Each of these sentences expresses two propositions, not one conjunctive proposition. For example, (1) expresses both the 'at-issue' proposition that Condi is implacable and the supplementary proposition that she used to be provost at Stanford. Calling the first one 'at-issue' is a bit misleading, since it is easy to imagine cases in which the content of the supplement, such as a nonrestrictive relative clause, is more controversial than that of the main clause. So Potts could just have well called the proposition that Condi is implacable the 'main' proposition, meaning merely that it is the content of the main clause.

Supplements are used to make 'speaker-oriented comments on a semantic core' (11), and the notational devices that Potts introduces in chapter 3 formally characterize how applying a supplement to material in the main clause yields a supplementary proposition. His apparatus

captures the fact that the truth-values of the main and the supplementary propositions are independent of each other. This is unlike the relationship between a classical semantic presupposition and the main proposition expressed by a sentence, whose truth OR falsity depends on the truth of the presupposition.

Now in what way is the supplementary proposition a SPEAKER-ORIENTED commitment? After all, a speaker who assertively utters (1), for example, commits himself to the truth of both propositions. The feature of being speaker-orientated emerges when the sentence is embedded in an indirect speech report, as in (4).

(4) John said that Condi, who used to be provost at Stanford, is implacable.

The content of the supplement in (4) is understood as the speaker's own comment, not as part of what he is saying John said. Note, however, that this content can be attributed by including an explicit indication:

(5) John said that Condi, who, he said, used to be provost at Stanford, is implacable.

But this just highlights the fact that supplements are semantically independent. In this respect, supplements differ from expressions that have been traditionally regarded as sources of conventional implicature, viz. words like *although, but, therefore,* and *yet.* For example, in the reporting of (6) with (7), the additional proposition generated by *but* can be part of what John is said to have said rather than the content of the reporter's side comment.

(6) John: Condi is smart but conservative.

(7) John said that Condi is smart but conservative.

This was one of the factors that led me to conclude that conventional implicature is a myth (Bach 1999). The propositions yielded by *but* and the other traditional candidates, as well as those yielded by supplements, are as much asserted as propositions expressed by main clauses.

This raises the question of whether being speaker-oriented makes the contents of supplements merely implicated. That is, even if they can't be embedded under *say,* aren't they still asserted? Indeed, Potts acknowledges that the presence of *implicature* in the term *conventional implicature* is 'unfortunate' (9), presumably because the difference between asserting and implicating is beside the point. The point is that sentences can express more than one proposition (not to be confused with expressing a conjunctive proposition), and that in this way the content of such a sentence is multidimensional, one dimension of which is speaker-oriented, in the way described above.

Utterance modifiers, such as *frankly, by the way,* and *in case you're interested,* are not on a par with other supplements. They are not used to make side comments on any part of the content of the main clause (Potts's 'semantic core'). Rather, they are used to comment on some aspect of one's act of uttering the main clause (for explanation and illustration see Bach 1999: §5).

After explaining how supplements work, Potts turns to words with expressive contents. Here he includes epithets, certain attributive adjectives, and honorifics. One interesting fact about them is that they generally are not used to distinguish one thing from another, for example, that jerk Jones as opposed to some other Jones. Indeed, as Potts observes, many expressive adjectives cannot occur in predicative position (168). For example, we can say *that damn Kaplan* but not *Kaplan is damn*. And those adjectives that can occur as predicates are then not used expressively – compare *that dirty bastard* with *that bastard is dirty*. Potts makes many other astute observations about the behavior of expressives of different sorts. These observations illustrate how they are speaker-oriented but, as I will suggest, Potts does not pinpoint the fact that expressives are speaker-oriented in a more radical way than supplements.

Supplements are speaker-oriented in that when occurring in indirect quotation (or in propositional attitude reports), they are not part of what is reported as said (or believed, etc.) but are used to add the reporter's side comment. But there is nothing speaker-oriented about the CONTENT of a supplement. The proposition that Condi used to be provost at Stanford is something that the speaker, his audience, and anyone else can entertain and believe. Expressives are speaker-oriented in a more radical way, a way that has consequences for Potts's suggestion that they give rise to conventional implicatures, even in his revisionary sense of the term.

This is clearest with expressive adjectives. These are speaker-oriented at least in the way that supplements are. Suppose Sam utters (8) and his utterance is reported with (9).

(8) Stan won't turn off his damn radio.

(9) Sam says that Stan won't turn off his damn radio.

The reporter's use of the expressive adjective *damn* cannot be taken as giving part of what Sam said (unless, as we will see below, it is taken as directly quoted). The reporter is expressing his own feeling about Stan's radio. But expressives are speaker-oriented in a further way: they are not used to express sharable content. Being speaker-oriented in this stronger way, they are not vehicles for conventionally implicating anything, even in Potts's sense. Expressing a feeling is not a kind of implicating.

To implicate something entails meaning it, that is, intending to convey it to one's audience. Presumably what is meant is a proposition, something that anybody can entertain and believe. But what is meant when one uses an expressive adjective? If I say, *That blasted TV isn't working*, what do I mean in addition to the proposition that the TV is not working? Is it something that my audience can agree or disagree with? I do not see that it is, and Potts agrees (157). But if that is right, then I do not mean ANYTHING in using *blasted,* although I certainly express a certain negative feeling toward my TV. Although my audience can recognize that I am expressing this feeling, in using *blasted* I do not MEAN that I have this feeling. I am expressing that feeling, not implicating it.

It is true that I am making a commitment – to actually having the feeling that I am expressing – but what is speaker-oriented is not my commitment but my feeling, which, in the relevant sense of *express,* only I can express. 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. So it is no surprise that when one includes an epithet in an indirect report, the only way it can be understood as attributed rather than used is if it is taken as directly quoted. Potts recognizes this fact (154) but overlooks part of the reason for it: part of the import of curse words and other epithets is the word itself, not just its content. Indeed, its metalinguistic character is suggested by the fact that we describe the use of such terms as 'name-calling'.

I have been suggesting that expressives do not give rise to implicatures, even in Potts's sense of the term. The specific case of nominal epithets poses a further problem. As Larry Horn has observed (p.c.), they seem to be counterexamples to one of Potts's core theses: 'No lexical item contributes both an at-issue and a CI meaning' (7). This thesis, which is more stringent than the independence condition, is built into Potts's multidimensional framework. However, it seems that the epithets in (10) and (11) play a dual role, both referential and expressive, in contrast to the expressive adjectives like *damn* and *blasted.*

(10) I wouldn't hire that shyster.

(11) That scumbug never returned my CDs.

It is worth noting that the same problem arises with *tu* vs. *vous* in French (and *du* vs. *Sie* in German) and with Frege's example of *horse, steed,* and *nag.* These also illustrate Frege's notion of 'coloring' and his idea that 'the content of a sentence often goes beyond the thought expressed by an utterance of it' (1918/1997: 331).

Quibbles aside, this is, as I implicated at the outset, a damn good book. Read it!

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