

On Predicting Pragmatic Relations

Author(s): John F. Richardson and Alan W. Richardson

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On Predicting Pragmatic Relations

John F. Richardson
Baruch College

Alan W. Richardson
Northwestern University

1. Notes on the Modern Muddle in Pragmatic Theory

There is a peculiar tension in the pragmatics literature. Over the last several years, empirical work has demonstrated the true lexical, syntactic, semantic and discourse-theoretic complexities of individual pragmatic phenomena. For instance, Horn (1978) noted that there are lexical exceptions to the otherwise (largely) pragmatically explicable phenomenon of neg-raising, as shown in (1).

- 1.a. I don't want to die. (I want not to die.)
- b. *I don't hope to die. (I hope not to die.)

Horn (1989) has also shown that precisely those *wh*-questions that are used rhetorically as universal negatives allow certain bits of syntax otherwise marginal to impossible in interrogative clauses, but allowed in universal negative constructions, as shown in (2).

- 2.a. Who (but a total idiot) would say that?
- b. I found out who (*but a total idiot) said that.
- c. No one (but a total idiot) would say that.

Horn (1984) has also argued for the existence of pragmatically motivatable but nonetheless truly semantic privative ambiguities, such as the one that explains the noncontradictory nature of (3).

3. There are three cows in the field; a bull and two cows.

Finally, Morgan has (1978) postulated "short-circuited" implicatures or conventions of use in order to preserve a pragmatic account of why questions like (4a) can convey a request, while acknowledging that synonymous questions like (4b) can do so only much less directly.

- 4.a. Can you hand me the paper?
- b. Are you able to hand me the paper?

At the same time that the collective weight of these examples and many others like them should have established that pragmatic theory must be internally complex and that even a realistically complex pragmatic theory will have to be able to interact with the other components of linguistic theory in various complicated ways, a (meta)theoretical movement informally known as radical pragmatics has been remarkably successful in convincing many that it is desirable to reduce all of pragmatic theory to a few grand principles and that even such a highly simplified pragmatic theory can radically extend its domain of explanation at the expense of the other components. Although it is impossible to pin down the guiding tenets of radical pragmatics unequivocally (as they are seldom actually propounded as such and many of them are not unanimously upheld even within the radical pragmatics community), we feel that the propositions presented in (5) capture its basic attitudinal drift.

5. A. Rational Reductionism: (1) Pragmatics is the general theory of human rationality applied to language use. (2) Rationality stands in stark opposition to convention and arbitrariness. (3) Rationality can explain particularized and generalized implicatures equally well. (4) Rationality can serve as the basis of a truly predictive and not merely restrictive pragmatic theory.
- B. Semantic Minimalism: (1) Pragmatic theory allows one to posit austere truth conditional logical forms. (2) Pragmatic theory minimizes the number of actual ambiguities that must be posited. Indeed, any putative ambiguity that can be given a pragmatic explanation is thereby shown to be spurious. (3) The only semantic properties relevant to pragmatic analysis are the entailment relations that hold between uttered and strategically unuttered propositions.
- C. Lexicogrammatical Minimalism: (1) Only a few, utterly straightforward aspects of surface syntax like constituent order and (relative) complexity are ever relevant to pragmatic analysis. (2) These few aspects of grammar are themselves relevant only if two pragmatically and syntactically dissimilar sentences are synonymous. Otherwise, the pragmatic difference should be pinned on the semantic difference. (3) The only exception to these "rules" is conventional implicature, which is a notion to be invoked sparingly and only as a property of lexical items, not of entire grammatical constructions.
- D. Pragmatic Minimalism: One can account for all pragmatic phenomena using fewer maxims than those proposed in Grice (1989), perhaps even enfolding the co-operative principle into one of the few remaining maxims.

We will define our own views against these propositions. Briefly, we will argue that important details of most if not all generalized implicatures fall well beyond the meager predictive powers of radical pragmatics, that literally none of the propositions in (5) deserve unequivocal support and that most deserve outright rejection. We will begin with a critique of rational reductionism and then critique the "three minimalisms" in turn.

2. Rational Reductionism

Let us first consider the proposition that pragmatics is the general theory of human rationality applied to language use. Although this part of the rationality thesis looks like it promises the ultimate in deep explanation, no pragmatician has ever proposed or endorsed a general theory of human rationality that is remotely well articulated enough to give this claim any real content. This, in turn, immediately robs the next three propositions of any real content, since one can hardly pretend to know what rationality stands in opposition to, how truly predictive a concept it is or what range of phenomena it can be used to explain until one has some semblance of an account of what rationality actually is. But if we charitably assume that we can intuitively rationality well enough to evaluate the plausibility of these claims, things actually get worse. For it is intuitively true that there is often more than one perfectly rational means for achieving a given goal G in a given context C. Moreover, when such a situation arises, it is always rationally permissible and frequently rationally advisable to arbitrarily pick one of the available means as the conventional way to achieve G-like goals in C-like contexts. To test this, simply consider the question of which side of the road one should drive on. There is certainly no rational basis for preferring the British to the American system or vice versa. But it is highly rationally advisable to simply choose one or the other system and to conventionalize whatever choice is made.

This finishes all hope of putting rationality into stark opposition to either convention or arbitrariness. But this is old news in the linguistic world; consider the phenomena in (1) - (4), Sadock's (1978; 1984b) work on calculable idioms and rational but unpredictable compounds or Lakoff's (1987) concept of motivated extensions to grammatical constructions. All we have added to the discussion is some intuitive

grounding in naive rationality theory that should help remove the apparently widespread feeling that there is something less than satisfying or even paradoxical about the notion of rationally motivated arbitrary conventions.

Of course, the best way to force a nonarbitrary choice between two otherwise equally rational practices is to define either the goal or the context in question in such detail that ultimately only one of the practices remains fully rationally defensible. This means that if pragmatics is simply rationality theory applied to language use, implicature should be highly dependent on the minute details of communicative goals and contexts. But while this is in fact true by definition for particularized implicature, it is false by definition for generalized implicature. This suggests that the third proposition of the rationality thesis is particularly misguided. Indeed, we submit that generalized implicature is far too insensitive to the details of actual communicative goals and contexts to be explained in any depth by rationality theory.

Finally, the last proposition under the rationality thesis promises a pragmatic theory that is predictive and not merely restrictive. If, however, pragmatic theory is based strictly on rationality, it can only be a restrictive theory. That is, while certain triplets of context, utterance and intended meaning can surely be ruled out as irrational, there will often be too many rationally defensible possibilities left over to make any determinate predictions. Indeed, it is empirically obvious that particularized implicatures can at best be rationally restricted and not fully predicted (by analysts or interlocutors). But it is precisely because of its merely restrictive nature that rationality is incapable of explaining anything so specific and automatic as a generalized implicature. However, it will become clear below that at least some of the specific and automatic details of at least some generalized implicatures require partially stipulative treatments. Since any appeal to stipulation is by definition a failure of prediction, there would appear to be no subdomain of pragmatic inquiry that is fully within the grasp of a truly predictive theory.

3. Semantic Minimalism

It may be tempting to believe that propositions (1) and (2) of semantic minimalism form the entire rationale for doing pragmatics in the first place. Note, for instance, that Grice's original program was motivated in large part by his desire to extend the traditional analyses of the logical connectives, quantifiers and so forth to their natural language analogues, with pragmatics supposedly bridging the gap between the communicatively rich intuitive meanings of the latter and the austere truth-conditional formal definitions of the former. He also proposed a principle, his modified Occam's razor, which enjoined one from postulating senses beyond necessity and this, too, seemed quite fundamental to his thinking.

Several things should be kept in mind, however. First, Grice correctly realized that parsimony considerations can only serve as a useful guide when one has some cogent basis for deciding just what is, in fact, really necessary - an open ended issue as analytical possibilities come and go. Modern attacks on supposed excesses in sense-postulation seldom even approach the sophistication of Grice's cautiously announced proposal. Turning to Grice's logical traditionalism, note first that Grice was writing as a great innovator. The typically overly optimistic goals and pronouncements of true innovators follow almost automatically from the naivete that they unavoidably bring to their newly established fields. Those of us who later enter maturing fields, on the other hand, are only as naive as we let ourselves be. Second, Grice allowed himself considerable pragmatic machinery with which to try to bridge the gap between intuitive and posited meanings, whereas radical pragmaticians have been eagerly scrapping much of Grice's machinery while frequently allowing gaps between intuitive and posited meanings greater than anything Grice proposed - a geometrically more ambitious program. Third, the logical analyses Grice wished to uphold had proven their value to semantic analysis in several centuries worth of logical work. The eminently reasonable idea that semantic analyses

should be motivated above all by their value to semantic theory appears, incredibly, to have few adherents among modern pragmaticians.

Consider Horn's (1972) famous claim that the numeric quantifiers strictly mean "at least *n*" and only implicate "exactly *n*" via a standard quantity implicature. Sadock (1984a) has pointed out that Horn's semantic proposal can make no sense of arithmetic statements like (6a). Horn (1989) has acknowledged the problem, but, remarkably unfazed by its devastating force, has continued to maintain the earlier analysis. Lest one hope that an appeal can be made to something concerning the technical uses of language or some subtle difference between the number names versus numerical quantifiers, we present (6b) as a perfectly colloquial and clearly quantificational sentence beyond the semantic reach of Horn's proposal.

- 6.a. The square root of nine is three.
 b. I took six cigarettes with me, gave one to Fred and two to Ed, so I still have three.

A less minimalistic analysis that posits an ambiguity between the "at least *n*" and "exactly *n*" readings would not be troubled by (6). Horn (1989) dismissed a version of such a proposal by Kempson (1986) and allies by pointing out that this would create an infinitude of ambiguous terms. This attempt at a crushing parsimony argument is badly misconstrued. One does not, for instance, refute the phrase structure ambiguity shown in (7) by pointing out that it would render infinitely many NPs structurally ambiguous.

7. [[NP and NP] and NP] versus [NP and [NP and NP]]

Closer to our present numerical home, the fact that every ordinal number term starting with *third* also has a portional reading, as seen in (8), does not cry out for a pragmatic account.

8. The six hundred and twenty-third patron receives one six hundred and twenty-third as much as the first.

In short, Horn has confused the unimportant question of how many items are "in the domain" of an ambiguity with the important question of how much apparatus is required to handle the ambiguity. There is no reason to believe that an "at least *n*" - "exactly *n*" ambiguity would require much machinery at all.

Now consider another classical quantity implicature. Perhaps no pragmatic analysis is more popular, or less radical feeling, than the one that derives the exclusive reading of *or* from the inclusive reading by the quantity scheme in (9).

- 9.a. [P and Q] unilaterally entails [P or-incl Q].
 b. Hence, if one can truthfully utter [P and Q], one should not utter [P or-incl Q].
 c. Hence, if one does utter [P or-incl Q], one thereby implicates [not [P and Q]].
 d. The conjunction of what is said, [P or-incl Q], and what is implicated, [not [P and Q]], is truth conditionally equivalent to [P or-excl Q].

Unfortunately, this apparently explanatory analysis mispredicts in the case of nonbinary coordination. The case of ternary coordination would, for instance, have to follow the scheme in (10).

- 10.a. [P, Q and R] unilaterally entails [P, Q or-incl R].
 b. Uttering the latter should implicate the negation of the former.
 c. What is conveyed should then be what is said plus what is implicated,
 i.e. [[P, Q or-incl R] and [not [P, Q and R]]].

But this predicts that (11) should convey that diners can choose any one or any two of the listed desserts, just not all three. In fact, however, it conveys that diners may choose one and only one dessert.

11. Diners may have cake, pie or ice cream.

A slimmed-down version of our sincerest effort to preserve the spirit of the traditional quantity implicature is given in (12).

12.a. Assume prototypical coordination to be binary.

b. In prototypical case, generate implicature as metalinguistic quantity implicature as follows:

a'. [P and Q] is true if and only both conjuncts are true.

b'. [P or-incl Q] is true if and only if at least one conjunct is true.

c'. For essentially the same reasons as those given in (9), [P or-incl Q] will tend to implicate that not both of its conjuncts are true.

c. The implicature in (c') is, in the prototypical case, equivalent to saying [P or-incl Q] implicates that exactly one of its conjuncts is true. Assume that the implicature is reanalyzed in just this way.

d. Extend the reanalyzed version of the implicature to all nonprototypical cases.

If this is correct, several very unminimalistic devices must be adopted. First and most obviously, prototype structures must be posited even for so "logical" a portion of the vocabulary as the conjunctions. Second, these prototype structures must have an abstract, schematic reality separate from the instantiations of the conjunctions in individual sentences, since it would be silly to claim that, for instance, (11) is prototypically a case of binary coordination, as it is obviously a case of ternary coordination plain and simple. Hence, third, the implicature does not directly exploit the entailment relations between uttered and unuttered propositions, but the relative lexical semantic "strength" of the two conjunctions. Fourth, we must posit an implicature reanalysis rule and a process by which the output of this rule is extended to nonprototypical cases. Finally, we at least strongly suspect that (12) really makes more sense as the pragmatical motivation of a privative ambiguity than as a "pure" conversational implicature as classically conceived.

4. Lexicogrammatical Minimalism

The relevance of constituent order to implicature has been argued on the basis of the intuitive nonsynonymy of pairs of sentences like those in (13).

13.a. Mary went to New York and bought some records.

b. Mary bought some records and went to New York.

The relevance of relative lexicogrammatical complexity to pragmatics can be seen in the intuitive nonsynonymy of pairs of sentences like those in (14).

14.a. Mary likes to go to New York and buy records.

b. Mary likes to go to New York and to buy records.

Since the order of the two VPs is the same in (14b) as it is in (14a), the failure of (14b) to implicate that the two VPs denote temporally consecutive parts of a complex action can only be traced to the occurrence of the second infinitive marker. A reasonable account would be that in using two full infinitive phrases instead of one, a speaker would be going out of her way to make the actions denoted by the two VPs appear separate and unrelated, thereby preempting the implicature in (14a). Evidence for the pragmaticity

of the phenomenon can be seen by considering (15a). Since there is no option of using just one gerund marker, as in (15b), uttering (15a) would not count as going out one's way to make the actions appear independent. Hence the implicature is fully available (though not, of course, mandatory).

15. a. Mary enjoys going to New York and buying records.
 b. *Mary enjoys going to New York and buy records.

Note now that the implicature is available when units larger than VPs such as Ss are conjoined, as seen in (16).

16. a. Mary went to New York and she bought some records.
 b. Mary bought some records and she went to New York.

Now, it is not immediately clear why the addition of a truth conditionally irrelevant subject pronoun in the second clause does not preempt the implicature just as the extra infinitive marker did in (14b). Note, however, that conjoining two that-clauses instead of two simple sentences can sometimes weaken the implicature, as in (17B), though this, too, is a palpably weaker effect than that in (14b) and one needs to use some real excess verbiage as in (17B') to get a comparably robust phenomenon.

17. A: Is it true that Mary joined Wicca and Ted left her?
 B: It is true that Mary joined Wicca and that Ted left her.
 B': It is true that Mary joined Wicca and it is true that Ted left her.

The question at this point is how much is really being explained by the claim that relative lexicogrammatical complexity has pragmatic effects versus how much we will end up having to stipulate concerning what particular bits of lexicogrammatical complexity have what particular pragmatic effects (if any).

But things get more complicated still, since the pragmatic effects in turn have grammatical effects. Consider the apparent coordinate structure constraint violations in (18), based on examples discussed in Lakoff (1986).

18. a. It's the kind of store you can go to and buy almost any record.
 b. It's the kind of record you can go to almost any store and buy.

Lakoff treated first conjunct violations such as (18a) as fundamentally distinct from second conjunct violations such as (18b). We are, however, unaware of any motivation for such a dichotomy and would propose, as a first stab, that coordinate VPs whose denoted actions are implicated to be ordered parts of a single complex action allow unilateral extraction from either conjunct.

This contrasts with the case in (19), also discussed by Lakoff as well as by Goldsmith (1985), where extraction is allowed only in the first conjunct.

19. a. How many courses can you teach and (still) publish at least two papers?
 b. *How many papers can you teach four courses and (still) publish?

The crucial difference in intuitive meaning governing the grammatical difference between the sentences in (18) and (19) can be seen in (20) - (23). In sentence (20a), the action denoted by the second of the conjoined VPs flows naturally from the first. This gives rise to the basic ordered complex action implicature, with the grammatical consequence that extraction is allowed from either conjunct, as seen in (21).

- 20.a. Bart took a year off and worked on his book.
 - b. Only an iron man could stay up all night and run a marathon the next day.
 - c. The Japanese eat tofu and don't get cancer.
- 21.a. How long did Bart take off and work on his book?
 - b. Which book did Bart take a year off and work on?

In sentence (20b), the action denoted by the second conjunct is also taken to follow that denoted by the first, but the whole point of the sentence is that the second action does not flow naturally from the first, but is unexpected. In this case, only extraction from the first clause is permissible, as seen in (22).

- 22.a. How late can you stay up and (still) run a marathon the next day?
- b.*How many miles can you stay up all night and (still) run the next day?

Sentence (20c) can be read either way, depending on whether eating tofu is taken to help or hurt one's chances against cancer. But note that while (23a) is "ambiguous" like (20c), (23b) has only the "natural flow" reading, just as expected.

- 23.a. What do the Japanese eat and not get cancer?
- b. Which disease do the Japanese eat tofu and not get?

Of course, when two conjoined VPs denote actions or states have nothing to do with each other, the coordinate structure constraint holds for both conjuncts, as seen in (24).

- 24.a. Violetta raises horseshoe crabs and plans to work in television.
- b.*What does Violetta raise and plan to work in television?
- c.*What does Violetta raise horseshoe crabs and plan to work in?

So we appear to have yet another case of pragmatically governed syntax. The question that now arises is whether we don't in fact have to simply acknowledge the existence of three separate coordinate VP constructions, each with its separate syntax and, crucially, separate conventionalized pragmatics. For note now that the coordinate structure constraint holds exceptionlessly in sentence coordinations, even when the sentences have the same semantics and pragmatics as the exceptional VP coordinations just discussed. Consider (24) and (25).

- 24.a. They went to the store and (they) bought some records.
 - b. Which store did they go to and (*they) buy those records.
 - c. Which records did they go to the store and (*they) buy?
- 25.a. They taught five courses and (they) published three papers.
 - b. How many courses can they teach and (*they) publish three papers?

The interplay between syntax and pragmatics is thus extremely complex in this case. Surely more than just constituent order and mere relative lexicogrammatical complexity must be referred to in accounting for all the goings-on here. In particular, it seems that conventionalized pragmatics does indeed extend to units of grammar of a significantly higher order than mere lexical items. But while lexical conventional implicature is a purely stipulative matter, the conventionalized implicatures associated with entire constructions are of a sort whose existence we have been arguing for throughout: fairly easily rationalizable inferences broadly consistent with but by no means fully determined by general principles.

4. Pragmatic Minimalism

While all the foregoing is highly important, ground zero of radical pragmatics is no doubt the modern search for a mere handful of maxims capable of all the work that Grice's four maxims and nine submaxims purported to do. The most extreme version of pragmatic minimalism is to be found in the "relevance" framework of Sperber & Wilson (1986), which supposedly uses only a single "principle" of relevance. We have, however, been unable to determine what, if anything, the content of Sperber & Wilson's claim is and will concentrate instead on the far more intelligible claims by Horn (1984; 1989) and fellow travellers.

Horn proposed to reduce all of pragmatic theory to three grand maxims. The first was apparently equivalent to Grice's quality maxim, though Horn did not articulate it. Although we believe that some important issues hinge on how Horn proposes to state this maxim, we will ignore these issues as for now unbroachable. Horn spared no effort, however, in articulating and defending his other two maxims, which he named Q and R in honor of quantity and relevance, but which in fact supposedly "collected" all of Grice's non-quality maxims. The principles are shown in (26).

26. The Q-Principle: Make your contribution sufficient. Say as much as you can.
 The R-Principle: Make your contribution necessary. Say no more than you must.

As noted in Levinson (1987), Horn is equivocally quantifying over informational content and mere verbiage in these principles. For instance, Horn claims that the R principle covers both Grice's second quantity maxim and third manner maxim, as reproduced in (27).

27. Quantity 2: Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.
 Manner 3: Be brief.

Levinson appears somewhat ambivalent about what to think about this. But note that the famous inference from (28a) to (28b), which Horn taxonomizes as an R-based implicature, is a case in which the utterance of a more verbose but less informative sentence implicates what could be asserted by uttering a less verbose but more informative sentence. This suggests a clash between Grice's second quantity and third manner maxims and refutes Horn's claim that they can both be covered by one grand principle.

- 28.a. Mary was able to solve the puzzle.
 b. Mary solved the puzzle.

Of course, as we already stated under lexicogrammatical minimalism in (5), pure conversational implicature can only be sensitive to such purely formal matters as relative verbosity precisely when the added verbosity does not add to the information content of a sentence, which fact renders Horn's attempt to equate such necessarily non-correlating formal and informational notions of linguistic quantity highly enigmatic.

This form-content equivocation is not the only one in Horn's work. In his (1984) paper, he claimed that his Q and R principles were somehow involved in the tension between respectful politeness (or aloofness) versus friendliness (or imposition), as seen in (29). Although there certainly is a dynamic tension between these two kinds of politeness, it is hard to imagine what any of this has to do with either the formal or the informational versions of his Q and R principles.

29. Excuse me, er, Professor ... , er, Lar- ..., er, Mr. Horn.

Now, the classical quantity implicatures all involve relative information content, not verbosity or aloofness or anything else Horn may have wished to account for with his theory. Within the restricted domain of relative information content, Horn's Q and R principles are strongly akin to Atlas & Levinson's (1981) principles of quantity and informativeness. Like Atlas & Levinson's dichotomy, Horn's is based on yet another bit of confusion, this time between the Gricean notions of what is implicated versus what is conveyed.

First consider the supposedly opposing pragmatic inference schemes in (30), drawn more or less directly from Horn's work, and their supposed instantiations in (31), which are the derivation of the exclusive reading of *or* and conditional perfection, respectively.

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| 30. Q-Based Implicata | R-Based Implicata |
| S entails W | S entails W |
| "W" implicates not S | "W" implicates S |

- 31.a. [P and Q] entails [P or Q];
 "[P or Q]" Q-implicates [not[P and Q]]
 b. [Q iff R] entails [if R, Q];
 "[if R, Q]" R-implicates [Q iff R]

But now consider the alternative inference schemes in (12).

- 32.a. [P or-excl Q] entails [P or-incl Q];
 "[P or-incl Q]" R-implicates [P or-excl Q]
 b. [not[if [not R], [not Q]]] entails [if R, Q];
 "[if R, Q]" Q-implicates [if [not R], [not Q]]

What this shows is that whether an inference instantiates the Q or R scheme depends strictly on what one takes to be the relevant entailing proposition. Since exclusive disjunction itself entails inclusive disjunction, why not just make this implicature an R implicature? Similarly, since a conditional is (classically) entailed by the negation of the converse of its contrapositive (or whatever that thing is in (32b)), why not derive the biconditional sense from the coordination of what is said and what is Q-implicated? If, however, one sets [P] in the above schemes equal to [not R], all of the equivalences in (33) hold according to classical logic. While some of these equivalences can and have been questioned, they do provide grounds to suspect that the implicatures giving rise to the exclusive sense of *or* and to conditional perfection are in anything but stark opposition, contrary to Horn's and Atlas and Levinson's repeated assumption.

- 33.a. The said [[not R] or-incl Q] equals the said [if R, Q]
 b. The unsaid strong prop [[not R] and Q] equals the unsaid strong prop [not[if [not R], [not Q]]]
 c. The implicated neg of strong prop [not[[not R] and Q]] equals the implicated neg of strong prop [if [not R], [not Q]]
 d. The conveyed [[not R] or-excl Q] equals the conveyed [Q iff R] (each equals coordination of said with implicated)

Indeed, the equivalences in (33) were overtly exploited in Prince's (1982) analysis of conditional perfection, which detoured through the exclusive or quantity implicature! Note that a similar confusion can be seen in Horn's attempt to treat examples like (34) as Q implicatures and examples like (35) as R implicatures. While there is without question a complementarity to these examples, the fact is that (34b) entails (34a) just as surely as (35b) entails (35a), so no entailment-based dichotomy will shed any light its nature.

- 34.a. I found a finger.
 b. I found someone else's finger.
- 35.a. I broke a finger.
 b. I broke one of my own fingers.

What Horn, Atlas and Levinson have lost sight of is that it is quite generally the case that what is conveyed properly includes and therefore entails what is said. (The only exceptions are cases of irony, metaphor, hyperbole and any other cases in which what is said is literally false and what is conveyed is therefore something other than what is said.) So we can now derive the maximally general and maximally useless scheme for all non-quality-based implicatures shown in (36).

36. Non-Quality-Based Implicata: S entails W
 "W" conveys S
 "W" implicates S minus W

The scheme in (36), which "predicts" implicatures only by subtracting the semantics of a sentence from what it is observed to convey when uttered, would seem to define the ultimate in non-explanation. Unfortunately, however, the Horn, Atlas and Levinson account will be just as utterly unexplanatory until some mechanism is proposed for predicting which entailing propositions are relevant for predicting the implicatures of an uttered proposition and which are not.

When one considers this last fact in the light of all the other criticisms of radical pragmatics developed in this paper, one finds oneself at a loss for reasons to believe that radical pragmatics is even on the right track. Instead, it would seem high time to acknowledge the undeniable: no theory that puts as high a premium on simplicity and generality as does radical pragmatics will have any hope of accounting for the complexities invariably uncovered when pragmatic phenomena are examined in detail. Since radical pragmatists themselves have produced most of the detailed examinations on which we base this conclusion, we have great hope that the alluringly bold but ultimately futile promises of radical pragmatics will soon begin to lose their appeal to those who honestly value full descriptive adequacy.

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