

Truth, Context and the Reference of Statements

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I, Solveig Aasen, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Signed:

Abstract

The overall project of this MPhil thesis is to defend a version of the view that is often called *contextualism* in philosophy of language, namely the version of the view that I take Charles Travis to hold. His view is that the meaning a sentence is insufficient for deciding on questions about truth and falsity, and that in arriving at the truth-conditions of an utterance the occasion on which the utterance is made *always* plays a determining role. In order to defend this view, I focus on a particular sort of example – which I refer to as a ‘*Travis case*’ – and that Travis uses to support his view. Travis cases, as I present Travis as conceiving of them, are supposed to show that the truth-values of utterances made by using the same sentence can differ, although the meaning of constituent expressions is the same and the sentence is used to speak about the same state of things in the world. I consider two alternative ways of analysing the example, from which Travis’s view does not receive support, and I give arguments as to why these analyses are problematic. By doing this, I aim both to give reasons as to why Travis cases support Travis’s view and to highlight in what respects his view differs from the views that are assumed in the alternative analyses.

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Preface

For a long time, I intended this thesis to defend a different and significantly more ambitious claim than what it does. I had this intention also at the time when I decided on a title, and had I chosen a title today, it would probably have been a different one. The original plan was to centre the thesis on the notion of ‘the reference of a statement’, which was a notion I thought I could develop on the basis of J. L. Austin’s notions of ‘states of affairs’ and ‘statement’, and where the claim I was planning to defend was that we cannot make the same statement twice. However, it gradually became clear that Charles Travis held a view that largely coincided with the view I wanted to argue for. The project of interpreting and presenting some arguments in favour of his view was initially a step towards the mentioned, more ambitious aim, and is the concern of the thesis I have written. The notion of the reference of a statement has a part to play also in the present argument, but a much less central one than what was intended in the original vision of the thesis.

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Introduction

It is a platitude that every sentence that gets uttered or written gets uttered or written in a context.¹ One need not think, however, that being uttered in a context matters much for most sentences. One may think that most sentences are such that in whichever context they get uttered they are used to speak of the same, and state a truth or falsity depending on the same conditions. Indeed, the traditional view on the matter is that only a few expressions are such that when they are used by a speaker, features of the context must be taken into account in order to understand what is spoken of and what the truth-conditions of the sentence are. So traditionally, context-sensitivity is thought to be a feature only of certain few expressions, namely so-called indexical expressions².

Thus, according to the most restrictive and conservative view on the matter, indexicals are the *only* context-sensitive expressions. However, there is also a moderate view, according to which the phenomenon of context-sensitivity extends to certain other classes of expressions as well. Thirdly, a radical view can be defended, according to which context-sensitivity pertains to all language use. In this thesis, I will be defending a version of the radical view, but before I commence with that, it is useful to briefly present how context-sensitivity is understood on the three mentioned kinds of views.

On the conservative view, there is, as mentioned, only one class of context-sensitive expressions, namely indexicals. On the moderate view, by contrast, there are several classes of expressions that have been argued to be context-sensitive. Although not an exhaustive list, a few of these classes of

¹ This might not be a platitude if one has a specialised enough notion of context. In this essay, however, I will by ‘context’ mean something very broad and only vaguely defined; time, place, the preceding conversation, the speaker’s intentions, gestures made by speakers and audience, background knowledge and beliefs shared by the participants, etc.

² Indexical expressions are expressions such as ‘I’, ‘you’, ‘it’, ‘we’, ‘yesterday’, ‘now’, ‘ago’, etc. So-called demonstrative expressions, such as ‘that’, ‘this’, ‘here’, etc. are sometimes distinguished from indexical expressions, but for present purposes I mean to include also this kind of expressions when talking about indexicals.

expressions are the following.³ Quantifiers can be thought to be context-sensitive in that their domain gets restricted by the context. Comparative adjectives like ‘tall’ can be thought to have a comparison class that is contextually determined. Belief reports, such as ‘Pierre believes that London is pretty’, can be thought to depend upon context for the notion or notions that are involved in the reported belief, which in Pierre’s case can vary between a notion of London as he is acquainted with it through a picture, or a notion of London as the city he just moved to. Counterfactual conditionals, knowledge attributions and moral attributions can be thought to be context-sensitive to a standard of similarity, a standard of knowledge, or a standard of what is good. Weather reports can be thought to be context-sensitive with respect to which location they concern. And expressions about geometrical shape, such as ‘France is hexagonal’, can be thought to be context-sensitive with respect to a standards of precision.

Now, there are two strategies on the moderate view for accounting for the context-sensitivity of these different classes of expressions.⁴ On one strategy, the context-sensitivity of all of the expressions is modelled after the context-sensitivity of indexicals. On this version of the moderate view, expressions like ‘hexagonal’, ‘rain’, ‘good’ etc. are taken either to be simple indexicals or indexicals relative to certain parameters, where, in the latter case, it is thought that a function or rule can be specified for how a certain feature of the context contributes to the content of the expression. For the expression ‘rain’, for instance, one may find it likely that this is an indexical with a location parameter, so that the logical form is ‘rain_[l]’, where ‘l’ is a location that needs to be provided by the context. For the expression ‘hexagonal’, on the other hand, one may find it likely that there is not *one* particular feature of the context that determines the reference of the expression, and one may for this reason regard it as a simple indexical. The version of the moderate view where context-sensitivity is equated with

³ The classes of expressions I list are taken from Cappelen and Lepore’s (2005, pp. 18-30) overview of cases of context-dependence.

⁴ I follow Recanti (2007, pp. 1-9) in distinguishing between the forms of context-dependence that are to be outlined below with regard to the moderate and the radical view respectively.

indexicality is the closest to the traditional view, as both views maintain that indexicality is the only form of context-sensitivity.

The other possible strategy on the moderate view for explaining the context-sensitivity of the different types of expressions mentioned is to claim that the expressions are pre-semantically dependent on context. Rather than thinking that the context-sensitivity consists in the fact that a reference cannot be determined for the expressions without a context, one can think that it consists in the fact that there are several possible readings of the expressions, and that when the expression is uttered in a context, we disambiguate between the readings. The most striking difference to the indexicality view of context-sensitivity is that when a reading of the expression is chosen, the linguistic material of the expression is thought to be just like the linguistic material of any other non-context-sensitive expression. So, for instance, the sentence 'Every student failed' can be thought to be ambiguous between 'Every student in the universe failed' and 'Every student in the class failed', or it can be thought to be elliptical for one of these sentences. When one of these readings is chosen on an occasion of use, however, the sentence functions like one of the non-ambiguous or non-elliptical sentences, i.e. as a sentence that is not context-sensitive according to the moderate view.

We should note that, compared to the radical view, there is a commonality between the conservative view and the two versions of the moderate view as concerns to the general picture of language use that they involve. Both on the conservative and the moderate views, context-sensitive expressions are the exceptional rather than the standard case of language use. The standard case is thought to be that an expression has a fixed meaning across all uses of it and a fixed way of contributing to the meaning of a sentence in which it is used. In the exceptional case of expressions that are context-sensitive, on the other hand, the shared thought between the conservative and the moderate view is that information about the context is required in order to fix or complete the meaning of the expression before its contribution to the meaning of a sentence can be determined in the standard way.

It is important to emphasise that when one on the radical view holds that context-sensitivity is a feature of all language use one is not holding that it is the exceptional case, as just described, that obtains for all expressions. On the radical view, context-sensitivity is not thought to be tied to particular classes of expressions and be triggered by an incompleteness of the linguistic material. Context-sensitivity is not a matter of context being needed to complete the meaning of context-sensitive expressions, so that they then can function in the standard, compositional way, and so that sentences in which they are used can be determined as true or false. Rather, on the radical view, sensitivity to context is a phenomenon that occurs for what are considered to be contents that have been contextually completed according to the conservative and moderate views, or for what these views consider to be contents that require no such completion from context.

How, then, is context-sensitivity to be understood on the radical view? As on the moderate view, there are also on the radical view two different strategies for explaining it. Firstly, one might think that what the context does is not only to determine a complete content along the lines that the conservative and moderate views envisage, but that it also, after this is done, determines a context with respect to which the content is determined as true or false, which might be different from the context where the expression is uttered. Recanati describes these two roles that that context plays as ‘the context of utterance’ and ‘the circumstance of evaluation’ or ‘the index’ respectively. This view of context-dependence, which Recanati calls ‘circumstance-relativity’, is in agreement with the conservative and moderate view in that all contents need not be completed or disambiguated by means of the context of utterance. But it differs from the conservative and moderate views in holding that there is always a further kind of determination provided by the context that is in play, namely the determination of the circumstance of evaluation, and that this kind of determination is required with respect to all use of expressions, i.e. it is a feature of all language use. As MacFarlane (2009) puts it, the difference between a view which holds that context-sensitivity is equivalent with

indexicality and the ‘circumstance-relativity’ view is that, on the former, context-sensitivity is understood as being a matter of the content of an expression varying with context, while, on the latter, it is understood more broadly as a matter of the extension of an expression varying with context.⁵ Thus the change in extension that proponents of circumstance-relativity envisage is not a change that influences the content an expression acquires in the context of utterance.

By way of contrast to the circumstance-relativity view of context-dependence, the second way in which one may think of context-sensitivity on the radical view *does* see context-sensitivity as changing the content an expression acquires in a context. On this second view, which Recanati calls the ‘modulation’ view, contents which the conservative and moderate views regard as complete is thought to be further refined or modulated by the context. As Recanati explains it, the meaning of an expression is modulated or modified either by that the words’ meaning is adjusted to the other words used, or by that their meaning is adjusted according to the discourse topic and the situation that the words are used to talk about (Recanati 2004, pp. 131-133). The adjustment of content is not motivated by a property of the linguistic expression. Rather, as Recanati puts it, modulation ‘takes place only to make sense of what the speaker is saying’ (Recanati 2007, p. 3).⁶

The version of the radical view that I will concentrate on and seek to defend is an instance of the modulation view. The particular variant of the modulation view I will concentrate on is the view advocated by Travis

⁵ When giving this characterisation, MacFarlane is describing a view he calls ‘nonindexical contextualism’, which is a variant of the view that I, following Recanati (2007), have called the ‘circumstance-relativity’ view.

⁶ Recanati (2004) writes that modulation is optional, but if one holds the radical view one may also think that the adjustment to context takes place every time a sentence gets uttered. What could be said to be optional in that case is the *extent* to which the meaning is modulated, or in what way it is. Recanati’s (2007) view, on the contrary, seems to be that modulation is optional in that it need not always take place in order for us to determine a truth-value of a sentence. Recanati seems to think that all of the four kinds of context-dependence mentioned – indexicality, pre-semantic adjustment, circumstance-relativity and modulation – can be in play in order to determine the truth-value of the use of a sentence. Given the differences with respect to language use that I mentioned as the standard, truth-conditional picture belonging to the indexicality and pre-semantic adjustment view on the one hand, and the picture belonging to the circumstance-relativity and modulation views on the other, I think it is problematic to hold that all four kinds of context-sensitivity can be in play, as this must mean endorsing two conflicting pictures of language use.

(2008a). Travis's view is often included under the general label '*contextualism*' (for instance in Cappelen and Lepore (2005) and Recanati (2004)). Borg (2010), on the other hand, has argued that Travis's position must be distinguished from views that have been characterised as contextualist (such as Recanati (2004) and Carston (2002)), and gives the label '*occasionalism*' to his view.

In order to get clear on what I take Travis's view to consist in, chapter one is devoted to a presentation of the view. In this chapter, as well as throughout the thesis, I focus on a particular example that is of a kind from which some claims central to Travis's position can be seen to follow. However, the claims only follow given that the example is analysed in a particular way. The plan for how to defend Travis's position is therefore as follows. In chapter one I present the analysis that Travis favours of the example, and I introduce some terminology in terms of which he formulates the conclusions that he draws from it. In chapter two and three, I then present two alternative kinds of analyses of the example. These are analyses that proponents of two versions of the traditional and the moderate views give. I give arguments as to why these analyses are problematic, so that, in so far as these arguments are accepted, the presented analyses ought to be rejected. Thus, the way in which I try to defend Travis's view is by a method of elimination. As far as I get to argue in this thesis, the process of elimination is not complete, as there are other views – most notably other versions of the radical view – that are still viable alternatives for all I argue. But although the arguments I give do not constitute conclusive reasons for favouring Travis's view, they do come some way towards so doing. The hope is also that it can highlight some aspects of the view that set it apart from the views that underlie the analyses to be discussed.

Chapter 1: Travis's View

The present chapter is meant as a presentation of Travis's version of what I called the radical view on context-sensitivity. The chapter has three sections. I first present an example that is an instance of what I stipulate a *Travis case* to consist in. I then present the analysis I take Travis to give of it and the conclusions he takes to follow from the analysis. In the second section, I give an account of how I understand Travis's notion of 'understandings' of words, as this will prove a useful notion in the discussion in preceding chapters. That words 'admit of understandings' is also what Travis takes to be part of the explanation of the examples that Travis cases constitute, and, centrally to this chapter, I think an investigation into this explanation reveals a fundamental difference between Travis's picture of language use and what I in the Introduction sketched as the standard picture of language use, belonging to the conservative and moderate views. The third section of this chapter is concerned with bringing out more clearly what that the difference consists in by comparing Travis's view to the view of truth advocated by Austin (1979).

1.1 A Travis case and Travis's analysis of it

Let me start with presenting an instance of the kind of examples Travis gives that I will refer to as '*Travis cases*'. Travis's rendering of the example in his 'Pragmatics' (Travis 2008a) is as follows:

Pia's Japanese maple is full of russet leaves. Believing that green is the colour of leaves, she paints them. Returning, she reports, 'That's better. The leaves are green now.' She speaks truth. A botanist friend then phones, seeking green leaves for a study of green-leaf chemistry. 'The leaves (on my tree) are green,' Pia says. 'You can have those.' But now Pia speaks falsehood. (ibid., p. 111.)

Pia paints some russet leaves green, and then she speaks about these leaves twice by uttering the sentence 'The leaves are green'. The first time, she speaks to herself after having painted them. The second time, she speaks to her friend, the botanist, when he or she calls and asks for leaves to study.

What I understand to be Travis's analysis of the example is as follows. Firstly, there are three assumptions that he takes for granted and that I take to be constitutive of what a Travis case is.

- (1) (World Invariance): The leaves that the sentence is used to speak of are the same on both occasions⁷.
- (2) (Semantic Invariance): The sentence is on both occasions used with the following semantics: some leaves are spoken of as being green.
- (3) (Truth-value Variation): The utterance of 'The leaves are green' is false on occasion and true on the other.

Let us look at how these three assumptions work together towards the conclusions Travis draws from them. Firstly, we can note that assumption (2) and (3), i.e. the assumptions that the same semantics is in play while the truth-values differ, would not on their own amount to any significant result had it not also been for that assumption (1) holds, i.e. that what the sentences are used to speak of is the same. Had the sentence been used to speak about different leaves, or the same leaves in a different state, this would simply be a case where the same sentence was used with the same semantics to say something true about some leaves, but used to say something false about some other leaves. That is, it would just be a normal case of the same sentence being used to speak about different things. There is no problem on anyone's view that an utterance about some leaves being green can be true, whilst an utterance about some other leaves being green, false. It is only a problem if the leaves are the *same* leaves in the *same* state, for then it would seem that both utterances would have to be either true or false, given Semantic Invariance.

Secondly, we see that assumption (2) about Semantic Invariance does important work in that it assures that the difference in truth-value cannot be blamed on there being a difference in the meaning of the sentences. There

⁷ As I defined 'context' in footnote one, the two different occasions on which Pia utters 'The leaves are green' are also different contexts. I will use 'context' and 'occasion' interchangeably throughout.

would be no problem in explaining two utterances being true and false respectively about the same leaves in the same state if the sentences were used with different semantics. This could happen if the sentence used was lexically or syntactically ambiguous, or if it was used as elliptical for some other sentence on one or both of the occasions – for example, if on the occasion with the botanist, it was used as elliptical for ‘The leaves are green beneath the paint’. If ellipsis or ambiguity were in play, it would mean that the phenomenon at work in the example would have been identified, and hence there would be no difficulty with explaining what is going on in the example. Of course, there can be attempts to account for the Travis case by appealing to ambiguity or ellipsis, since there are many possible accounts of ellipsis and ambiguity under which the sentence ‘The leaves are green’ can be accounted for. However, in making assumption (2) Travis rejects that such ‘domestications’, as he calls such attempts, succeed. We will get to look at what reason Travis has for making this assumption in chapter 3, where indexical approaches, which typically reject assumption (2), are considered. For the moment, we simply observe that assumption (2) means that the sentence ‘The leaves are green’ is assumed to be a non-ambiguous and non-elliptical sentence. In general, assumption (2) is important because it means that there is nothing special about the semantics of the sentence ‘The leaves are green’. For this reason, conclusions that can be drawn from the particular example the Travis case provides can be generalised to all sentences that are used so that there is nothing special, such as ambiguity or ellipsis, at work in their semantics.

Finally, we can observe that if assumption (3) about Truth-value Variation were left out, and assumption (2) and (1) kept, so that it was assumed that both utterances were true, this would not be a significant result either, as it would mean that the same thing was said twice about the same leaves in the same state. However, granting that assumption (1)-(3) holds, Travis takes it to follow from the fact that the truth-values of the utterances are distinct that the utterances must have different truth-conditions. So he assumes that, in

general, a difference in truth-values must imply a difference in truth-conditions.⁸

From the conclusion that the truth-conditions of the utterances on the two occasions are different, Travis can draw a few striking conclusions from his case. The general diagnosis of the case is that the semantics stipulated in (2) is compatible with several distinct truth-conditions. Or, as one can also put it, the case shows that meaning underdetermines the truth-conditions of an utterance. There are two aspects to this conclusion about the underdetermination of truth-conditions:

(i) On the one hand, Travis takes the fact that the semantics of the constituent words of the sentence is the same on both occasions while the truth-conditions differ to show that the constituents ‘may make any of many semantic contributions to wholes of which they are part’ (ibid., p. 115). This is a significant result, because it means that principles of compositionality – principles that assert that there is a fixed meaning of constituents such that this fixed meaning and the structure of the sentence determine the meaning of the sentence – are false, since the idea is that there is not just one fixed contribution that the constituents make.

⁸ In making this assumption, Travis must be excluding some possibilities for explaining the difference in truth-values. Predelli (2005) has argued that the utterances in the Travis case are evaluated with respect to different ‘points of evaluation’, where such points can be understood in different ways, for instance as possible worlds. Although there is a sense in which the same world in the same state is in question on both occasions, different interests and attitudes are in play on the two occasions, and this can be understood as the utterances being evaluated for truth and falsity with respect to different possible worlds (ibid., pp. 364-365). The interests and attitudes are clearly different when Pia remarks upon the look of the leaves and when she remarks upon their botany. In this way, a difference in truth-value need only mean that the utterances are evaluated with respect to different points of evaluation, whilst the truth-conditions of the utterances may be the same. Another possible way to reject the assumption could be put forward from what has been suggested by Wright (1994) with regard to pluralism about truth. Wright thinks that there are different discourses such that what could be true in one discourse could fail to be so in another (ibid., p. 234-235). In Pia’s case one could claim, although I am not certain if Wright would approve, that there is one artistic discourse on the first occasion and a scientific one on the other. In that case, the same truth-condition could be evaluated as true with respect to one discourse and false with respect to another, so although there is a difference in truth-values, there is no difference in truth-conditions.

(ii) On the other hand, the example is meant to show that when uttered on different occasions, a sentence may have any of many different truth-conditions. However, if this is the case, Travis points out, then the different truth-conditions we get on different occasions cannot be conditions for the truth of the *sentence*, since the sentence may be true according to some of the conditions, but not according to others. Rather, the truth-conditions must be conditions for the truth of the utterance that the sentence is used to make. So truth is a property of utterances, not of sentences.⁹

1.2 Travis's notion of 'understandings'

Let me introduce some Travisian terminology. As I put it in (ii), a conclusion from the Travis case is that it must be the use of a sentence on an occasion that is true or false. Travis, on the other hand, would refer to this use of a sentence on an occasion as a 'speaking', and in what follows I will use these terms interchangeably. Also, according to Travis, when a sentence is used on an occasion there is 'a thought that it expresses'. And further, Travis says that when words or sentences are used on occasions, they 'admit of understandings'. Hence, a different way of putting the above conclusion that sentences are compatible with many different truth-conditions would be to say that sentences can express many different thoughts, or that sentences admit of many different understandings – understandings or thoughts that correspond to the different utterances or speakings that the sentence can be used to make, and where understandings, thoughts and speakings are individuated by truth-conditions.

For my purposes, it will be useful to focus on Travis's notion of understandings. In the case with Pia and the leaves, Travis would explain that the difference between the occasions is the different understandings that the words 'The leaves are green' bear on the different occasions. On one

⁹ Travis gives several examples that fulfil the same three assumptions and that he uses to establish the same conclusions. Also, there are several versions of the example with the green leaves – some used by Travis and some that can be found in discussions of this kind of examples. Although Sainsbury (2001) seems to think that different phenomena are at work in the different examples, I think the analysis that I have presented Travis as giving and the alternative analyses to be considered in later chapters are analyses that could be transferred to the other examples Travis gives.

understanding of those words – the aesthetic understanding, as we may call it, since it is concerned with appearances – they are true, because the leaves in question look green. But on the other understanding – the botanical understanding – they are false, since the leaves are russet maple leaves. The reason as to why it is important for my purposes to focus on understandings is that the way Travis seems to think that we acquire an understanding of a sentence proceeds from a sensitivity to that which the sentence is used to speak of. In this way, there is a story to be told about how understandings arise, which I will attempt to tell in this section.

Firstly, we can note that although Travis thinks that sentences as such do not give us truth-conditions, he does not think that what sentences or words mean is completely irrelevant to the truth-conditions that speakings of them can have. The point he is making with his case is only that it cannot be the meaning that words have *alone* that gives us the truth-conditions of a speaking. As Travis puts it, '[w]hat words mean plays a role in fixing when they would be true; but not an exhaustive one' (ibid., p. 94), where, as I explained under (i), the meaning words have is not such that they make the same contribution to truth-conditions on every occasion of use. What is it, then, that plays a role in addition to the meaning of words in fixing when the words as used on a given occasion would be true? Travis's answer is, in short, that it is 'what truth is' in the particular circumstances where the speaking is made. However, by 'what truth is' Travis does not mean something that is the same in every case, or on every occasion where a given sentence is uttered. For different speakings of words with the same semantics, there are 'different ways the world must be' in order for the speaking to be true. The Travis case presented can serve as an example, since the reason as to why one speaking is true and the other false in this case is that the speakings require 'different ways the world must be' in order to be true. So even though both the world and the semantics stay the same, what is required for truth in the one case is met by the leaves in their condition, while what is required for truth in the other case is not met by the leaves in that same condition.

Since what is required of how the world must be in order for a sentence to be true is not the same on every occasion, it follows that Travis should have some account of why words spoken on a certain occasion have a certain understanding, and how we grasp what that understanding is. Travis's account of this consists in claiming that both knowing what truth is and grasping the understanding that words bear on an occasion involve a certain kind of sensitivity to the occasion. He writes:

Understanding requires sensitivity. Understanding words consists, in part, in sensitivity to how they fit with the circumstances of their speaking. Part of that sensitivity is how they need to fit in order to be true. So adequate sensitivity requires grasping what truth is, and how that notion applies in particular cases. (Ibid., p. 102.)

Although in the quote Travis says that understanding in part *consists in* sensitivity, I think he is not of the opinion that the sensitivity is (partly) identical to the understanding of the words. Rather, I think he must mean that the sensitivity guides us in arriving at this understanding. What also guides us in arriving at the understanding of the words is the meaning they have, but, as aforementioned, the Travis case shows that the meaning is insufficient for arriving at this understanding, so the sensitivity to the occasion where they are used is required in addition. The reason as to why I think the sensitivity to the occasion only guides, but does not constitute, the understanding of the words is that Travis seems to be operating with an ontological distinction between what the sensitivity is a sensitivity to and what the understanding of the words is of. The ontological distinction is between '*ways for things to be*' and '*things being as they are*'. Ways for things to be are possible ways to think – they are part of what Travis calls the conceptual – and hence understandings of words, being something we grasp as thoughts, are of ways for things to be. Things being as they are, on the other hand, is that which words speak of. One could say that things being as they are is a worldly condition, or a state, or, as Travis does, part of

the non-conceptual.¹⁰ I think it is something like this distinction that Travis has in mind when he writes the following:

There are different things being on a rug may, sometimes rightly, be taken to be; each with its own results for when things would be that way. Thus for *all* the ways for things to be our words speak of. (Travis 2008b, p. 17.)

However, the distinction is perhaps the clearest where Travis talks about the ‘plasticity’ of language, which refers to a point Frege makes about the fact that natural language can be used for many purposes because it is not strict and precise like a formal language should be, but its expressions can be mutated for use in connection with many purposes. Frege takes this mutability of language to be a deficiency formal languages must surpass, where it is precisely how to make a system such that that all signs are given precise and fixed meanings that Frege strives to give guidelines for.¹¹ Travis, on the other hand, being occupied with natural language, sees the plasticity of language as the feature of it that explains why understandings of expressions are required (in addition to word meaning), of why the linguistic meaning an expression has does not play an exhaustive role in fixing the truth-conditions the expression has on an occasion of use. In relation to this, Travis writes:

We come to see – the world may teach us – novel understandings of being thus and so, where our language provides us one or more descriptions which are, specifically, descriptions of being *that*. For any understanding of a thing, or things, being that, we may, in so describing things, say them to be as they are if that on that understanding. We learn new things one might understand by being that; new things being that might be taken to be. We thereby gain the ability to use old descriptions (ones already at our disposal) to new ends; for expressing new thoughts. (Travis 2008a, p. 136.)

¹⁰ The conceptual, in Travis’s usage, has the feature that for a certain way for things to be, there would still be such a way for things to be even if things were not the way they are. So there is a certain kind of generality to the conceptual. The non-conceptual lacks this feature. (See Travis 2008b, pp. 4-7.) Although this distinction is of independent importance and interest to Travis, it is for my present purposes mainly relevant in what it means for the way understandings of words are acquired.

¹¹ Frege is explicitly concerned with this task in ‘Logic in Mathematics’ (Frege 1979) and it is also a recurring theme and driving motivation in *The Foundations of Arithmetic* (Frege 1980).

I read the thought in these quotes to be that the understandings we have of expressions stem from a sensitivity to how things are with what the expression is used to speak of, i.e. of a sensitivity to a way for things to be. It is because we are sensitive to that which the words are used to speak of – which is the world, or a state for it to be in – that understandings of words can be had. The way I think of this sensitivity to ways for things to be is that there is something we understand about the state of the world. But this understanding of worldly conditions is different from and explanatorily prior to the understandings that we have of words. An example from Recanati (2004, p. 23) is useful here. As he writes, in the sentence ‘Mary took out her key and opened the door’ we (normally) understand that Mary first took out her key and then opened the door with it.¹² The way to explain that the sentence often bears this understanding that I think is suggested by the present point is that the understanding of the sentence stems from a sensitivity to, or understanding of, how keys (normally, or in this case) open doors. Understanding how keys open doors is an understanding of a worldly condition, not of words, but, as the present claim is, it is this understanding that the understanding of the words is derived from. What we fundamentally understand is therefore the world around us, and only derivatively from this do we understand words.

The focus in the latter quote is on the world teaching us new understandings, and ‘old descriptions’ being used to ‘new ends’. As I read Travis, the significance of the understanding being a new one is not necessarily that it is completely different from the understandings we have had of the sentence on previous occasions. Of course, this can happen too; a sentence can come to be used in a way that is surprising to us and where we have to adjust our understanding of the words considerably in order to grasp what the speaker is saying. This will typically be cases where, as we say in

¹² Recanati seems to think that this is the only way in which we can understand this sentence. However, I think Travis would claim that there can be other understandings of this sentence too. For instance, a different understanding would be had in a case where the door in question had no lock, but where Mary planned on using a key to distract attention once she was at the other side of the door.

everyday speech, the speaker stretches the meaning of an expression. As explained with regard to the understanding of ‘Mary took out her keys and opened the door’, I think Travis’s view would be that we also in ‘stretched’ cases would have to look at that which the sentence is used to speak about in order to arrive at an understanding of the sentence used. However, it is not just in special cases that such adjustment – or, to use Recanati’s term, modulation – to the ways things are is required. In fact, Travis seems to think that on every occasion where words are used successfully they admit of an understanding, which is an understanding they admit of due to that which they are used to speak of. So when Travis talks about ‘new’ understandings in the quote, the uses need not be of a particularly revolutionary kind. Every use of a sentence is new, in the sense that, because the word meaning is insufficient to give truth-conditions that will allow us to determine whether the speaker said something true or false, an understanding is derived from our sensitivity to the way things are on that occasion.

That there always must be an understanding of a sentence to be grasped when a sentence is successfully used on an occasion to make an utterance is thus a point that has a close connection to what I presented as Travis’s conclusion (ii) from his case, which was that it cannot be the sentence that is true or false, but only the speaking. However, with the view in mind that understandings of words are derived from a sensitivity to the occasion, I think the point can be made in a different way as well. The idea that word meaning is not enough to understand whether a speaker’s utterance is true or not is something one can easily recognise with respect to sentences containing indexicals, because we see that we need to be sensitive to what the indexical is used to refer to. Also for sentences with names, one might easily see that we need to be sensitive to, say, who the name ‘Smith’ is referring to on this occasion, since there are many Smiths in this world. Along similar lines one could think that for general names, i.e. nouns, it is essential to recognise which ways for things to be that the sentence with the noun is being used to talk about in order to understand whether an utterance of it is true or false. The sentence ‘The cat is on the mat’, for instance, may

be used to talk about many different cats and different mats on different occasions, some for which an utterance of that sentence will be true and others for which an utterance will be false. And also for sentences containing verbs, one could perhaps start to think that, disregarding pre-semantic adjustments like ambiguity and ellipsis, what it is to, for instance, sit can be different on different occasions; I can sit on a chair, but not in the same way as a book sits on my bookshelf. In general, it may start to look plausible that there are many sentences – perhaps all – for which it is the case that the ways for things to be that they are used to talk about on a given occasion guide what utterance the sentence is used to make on that occasion.¹³

Now, one might think, as I mentioned that the first quote in this section (from Travis 2008a, p. 102) could seem to suggest, that the understanding of words we have on a given occasion, rather than being *derived from* a sensitivity to or understanding of things being as they are, *consists in* this latter sensitivity or understanding. If it is agreed, as I put it above, that what we fundamentally understand is the world around us, one could think that the understanding we have of words just is an understanding of the state of the world. In that case, there would be no distinction between the understanding of an expression and the understanding of or sensitivity to things being as they are. However, this is not how I understand Travis to picture it. For as I noted above, he seems to endorse an ontological distinction between ways for things to be and things being as they are. He writes that a way for things to be – such as leaves being green, which is a possible way to think – admits of understandings. By this he seems to mean that our sensitivity to things being as they are, to worldly conditions, makes us able to modify or adjust the general possible way to think, so that it is narrowed down or made particular, but not that this general way to think is

¹³ I should emphasise that although it may appear as if I am arguing that there is an understanding to be had of the constituent words that function as names, nouns or verbs within the sentence, this is not my view. Nor is it Travis's; as I will explain in chapter three, Travis argues that we cannot separate the understanding of a constituent word in a sentence used on an occasion from the understanding of the sentence as a whole. The reason as to why I focus on particular types of expressions above is that I hope this might be a way to make those sceptical of the idea that there are understandings of sentences see why they should not be.

replaced by the sensitivity to the state of the world. This means that the understanding of words on an occasion of use is still an understanding of something conceptual, so that it is an understanding we can continue to have, although the state of the world changes. However, Travis seems to think that the possibility of having an understanding of words is conditioned by the fact that the world has been in the state that the understanding of the words takes it to be. This is what I think he means when he writes that ‘one could not have thought of things as precisely what they in fact are had things not been precisely as they in fact are’ (Travis 2008b, p. 6). So things being as they are is necessary in order for us to acquire a particular understanding of words on a given occasion, although, when we grasp this understanding of the words, what we grasp is a way for things to be, and if the world changes we can still grasp this way for things to be.¹⁴

1.3 Comparison to Austin’s view on truth

In the previous section I tried to show how it seems to be part of Travis’s view that the understanding we have of a sentence when it is used on an occasion derives from a sensitivity to the state of things that the sentence is used to speak of on that occasion. However, it seems that if this is so, then we need to know what state of things is that the sentence is used to speak of *before* we have an understanding of it on the occasion in question. In fact, it seems that not only need we know what state of things the sentence is used to speak of; we also need to understand something about the state of things in question in order to use this to shape the understanding of the words. It is the former observation, that we need to know what state of things the words are used to speak of before we have an understanding of them, that is central to the concerns of the present section, as this can be seen to exhibit a fundamental difference between the picture of language use that follows with Travis’s view and what I in the Introduction outlined as the standard picture belonging to the conservative and moderate view.

¹⁴ Perhaps it is possible to say that the way in which Travis seems to think that things being as they are facilitates understandings is a way in which the non-conceptual makes possible an extension of the conceptual.

In an attempt to make this observation clearer, I will briefly draw a comparison with Austin's (1979) view. As we have seen, Travis thinks that what the sentence is used to speak of is things being as they are, which I have also referred to as 'the state of things' or a 'worldly condition'. Although Travis does not use the phrase, I think it would not be out of line with his intentions to follow Austin and call that which a sentence is used to speak of on an occasion a state of affairs. In Austin's usage, I think a state of affairs can be thought of as a spatiotemporal part of the world. It is a datable and local state of the world, where the fact that it is datable is underlined by Austin in that he often speaks of *historical* states of affairs.

Austin thinks of the notion of states of affairs as that which *statements*, which correspond to what Travis calls speakings and what I throughout also have been calling utterances, are made with reference to.¹⁵ Austin makes a famous generalisation about when a statement is true from which it follows that all statements are made with respect to a particular state of affairs. Austin's generalisation is as follows:

A statement is said to be true when the historic state of affairs to which it is correlated by the demonstrative conventions (the one to which it 'refers') is of a type with which the sentence used in making it is correlated by the descriptive conventions. (Austin 1979, p. 122.)

Austin's thought is that we on the one side have the particular, i.e. the statement and the and the historic state of affairs, and that we on the other have the general, i.e. the sentence and the type of state of affairs, and that when the historic state of affairs falls under the general type of state of affairs, the statement is true. Travis does not, as far as I know, make any claims that correspond directly to this claim of Austin's. However, one aspect of the generalisation that Austin makes could be put as being that conventions, both of which kinds Austin says are included under semantics, are not enough to determine the truth and falsity of a statement. In that

¹⁵ Like Travis, Austin is concerned to point out that truth must be a property of speakings, or statements, and not of sentences. An early statement of the point is the following: 'the question of truth and falsehood does not turn only on what a sentence is, nor yet on what it *means*, but on, speaking very broadly, the circumstances in which it is uttered. Sentences are not *as such* either true or false' (Austin 1964, p. 111, original emphasis).

respect, Austin's generalisation is similar to Travis's claim that the meaning of words is not enough to determine the truth and falsity of an utterance they are used in making. What also follows from Austin's generalisation is that what is needed in addition to conventions in order to determine truth and falsity is a connection to the particular state of affairs that the words are used to speak of or refer to. As we looked at in the previous section, Travis seems to think that on all occasions where a sentence is spoken and successfully used in a speaking, there is an understanding of the sentence, which is derived from a sensitivity to how the words used fit with the circumstances of their speaking. So in every case where we have a (successful) speaking, what speaking is made or what the speaker said, i.e. what understanding the words used bear, depends upon the state of things on that occasion. As I see it, this is similar to how Austin thinks that every statement is made with respect to a particular state of affairs, which also for him means that what statement that is made depends upon which state of affairs it is made with respect to. At least, the idea that there is a state of things or state of affairs that words are used to make speakings or statements with respect to seems to have a similar place in Travis's and Austin's view. So it seems as if we could call the state of things that the understanding depends on a state of affairs in the Austinian sense.

What is in my view particularly noteworthy with regard to the above-argued point that the idea of things being as they are seems to be playing a similar role in Travis's view as states of affairs do in Austin's, is that Austin talks of states of affairs as the *reference* of statements. For instance, in saying what a statement is Austin writes:

'A statement is made and its making is an historic event, the utterance by a certain speaker or writer of certain words (a sentence) to an audience *with reference to* an historic situation, event or what not' (Austin 1979, p. 119-120, my emphasis).

Also in the generalisation rendered above, Austin says in parentheses that the state of affairs that is in question is the one to which the statement 'refers'. In light of this, we could perhaps also call the state of things that a

statement or a speaking is used to speak of the referent of that statement or speaking. What is problematic about talking about there being a reference of statements, however, is that there is an argument, often called the slingshot argument¹⁶, to the effect that if sentences have a reference, then they must all refer to the same. To the extent that it is right to call states of affairs for Austin and things being as they are for Travis the reference of statements or speakings, the referents are certainly not the same for every speaking or statement made. However, this is not the place to go into the details of the slingshot argument.

The reason as to why I point out that states of affairs and things being as they are can be thought of as the reference of statements or speakings, despite the difficulties that this may get one into, is that I think this makes clear a contrast between views like Travis's and Austin's and what I have outlined as the standard picture of language use. The observation I started this section with was that if our understanding of words on an occasion is to be derived from a sensitivity to the state of things – or to a state of affairs – then we need to be able to know what the state of things that the words are used to speak of is before we have an understanding of the words. With the possibility of calling the state of affairs the reference of the statement or the reference of the speaking, we can see why many may think it impossible that we should know what the reference is before we understand how the sentence is used. On a Fregean picture of sense and reference, we learn that an expression can have a sense and lack a reference, but that the opposite is

¹⁶ The slingshot argument is put forward in many different forms. For a detailed account of these, see Neale (2001). In a very general and non-technical formulation, I take the idea behind the slingshot argument to be that because we would like to say that some sentences have the same reference – for instance the sentences 'Sir Walter Scott is the author of *Waverley*' and 'Sir Walter Scott is the man who wrote the twenty-nine *Waverley* novels altogether' as is Barwise and Perry's (2001) example – it becomes impossible to resist the conclusion that all sentences have the same reference, for where is one to set the limit? One reason as to why one might think that the slingshot does not apply to Austin's and Travis's view is that these two are concerned with statements or speakings, and not with sentences, which is what the slingshot argument concerns. Perhaps one way to avoid the conclusion of the slingshot argument is to claim that no two speakings have the same reference. I think this is not too implausible to claim with respect to speakings, although it may seem implausible if one thinks that it is sentences that are true or false. Immediately there may seem to arise a problem with regard to how one manages to report truly on someone's utterance if it is the case that no two speakings have the same reference, but I think this problem is only an appearance, although I will not go into the details of why here.

not possible, and this seems to suggest that in order to be able to know what the reference of an expression is, we need to go via its sense. Indeed, on the standard picture of language use, the reason as to why we need to have a complete content of all constituent expressions is that if referring expressions lack a referent, as context-sensitive expressions are thought to do outside context, we cannot determine whether what the sentence as a whole is used to say is true or false. The picture of language use that Travis's view gives us is reversed compared to this standard picture. Instead of arriving at what the words are used to speak of by considering what they mean, we, on Travis's view, draw on that which the words are used to speak of – the reference of the speaking – in order to arrive at an understanding of the words. A question from the point of view of someone holding the standard view, I imagine, could be how we can know what the reference of the speaking is before we have an understanding of the words that are used to refer to it, since this presumably seems impossible on the standard picture. Both Austin's and Travis's reply would be, I think, that exactly how we get to know what the reference is is a complex process that will vary between cases, and since it varies between cases no uniform explanation can be given of it. What could be relevant to how we get to know what the reference is is our knowledge of the preceding conversation, our observation of the speaker's movement and expression, what we take to be the speaker's purposes for speaking etc. – in short, aspects of the context could be relevant.

An important difference between the standard picture and Travis's view is of course that the reference that I have argued Travis could talk of is not a reference of the individual words, but of the speaking as a whole, where the latter reference cannot be understood as the conjunction of the referents of what on the standard picture are called the referring terms of the sentence. As Austin emphasises, we could have a language where a single word was used to refer to a complex state of affairs. However, to make the language more learnable, bits of language are often made to ‘‘mirror’ in conventional ways features described in the world’ (Austin 1979, p. 125). But even so, Austin maintains, it remains the case that the truth of statements depends on

the state of affairs, i.e. the *whole* part of the world that the statement is used to refer to, and that the structure of parts of the world need not ‘mirror’ the structure of the language. On the standard picture, by contrast, it must be presupposed that the structure of the sentence corresponds to the structure of that which it speaks of. However, I think we can conclude that despite the differences between the pictures as concerns whether it is sentences or speakings that are true or false and whether it is individual words or speakings that have a reference, it appears as if knowing what the reference of the speaking is before we know what the understanding is, and even using the reference to arrive at the understanding that the expression has in the context, means that there is a reversed relationship between sense and reference on Travis’s view.

1.4 Conclusion

To sum up, the view I have presented Travis as having is the following: What we understand by words is not given only by the meaning they have, but always involves an adjustment to the occasion on which they are used, where the adjustment to the occasion is made in accordance with that which the words are used to speak of on the occasion in question. I tried to show how this view is similar to Austin’s view in that there must always be a referent that a speaking is made with respect to. This referent, I argued, must be known antecedent to grasping an understanding of the words, which means that rather than our understanding of words being a guide to what they are used to speak of, what they are used to speak of guides how words are to be understood on an occasion of use.

Chapter 2: A Minimalist Analysis

The analysis of the Travis case that I will consider in this chapter is put forward by Sainsbury (2001). Although Sainsbury is not necessarily himself a proponent of the view, I see his analysis as *semantic minimalist* in spirit, where semantic minimalism falls under the general view that I called the conservative view in the Introduction. Minimalists hold that the semantically expressed content of a sentence S is the content that is shared by all utterances of S (Cappelen and Lepore 2005, p. 143). They call this shared content the minimal proposition. The minimal proposition that is the meaning of a sentence can, according to minimalists, be understood and grasped by anyone independently of the context in which the sentence is used (ibid.; Borg 2004, pp. 18-19, 25). While minimalists think that there is also a richer content that the sentence can be used to communicate when a speaker utters it in a certain context, they hold that it is the minimal proposition that carries the content that is the sole basis for determining the truth and falsity of the speaker's utterance; it is the minimal proposition that constitutes what the speaker said¹⁷.

I start the chapter with some considerations concerning how minimalists view the Travis case. I argue that it appears as if central minimalists like Cappelen and Lepore and Borg lack a positive explanation in what I take to be their analysis of the case, and that Sainsbury's analysis of the case could come to the rescue in this regard. In section two I present what Sainsbury's analysis consists in. However, as I show in section three, there is a principle that Sainsbury's analysis rests on, which, in section four, I argue to be implausible. In fact, I argue that the principle must be rejected on Sainsbury's and the minimalists' analysis if the positive explanation that is needed in the minimalist analysis of the Travis case is to be given.

¹⁷ I should note that the expression 'what is said' is used to refer to different things by the minimalist and contextualists, since they both understand it to pick out what is to be evaluated as true or false, and they disagree about whether what is to be evaluated as true or false is the minimal meaning of the sentence or what the sentence is used to express on the occasion of use.

2.1 Minimalists and the Travis case

With regard to the Travis case at hand, minimalists think that there is a minimal meaning of the sentence ‘The leaves are green’ that is the same on both of the occasions in question. Thus the minimalist concedes to Travis what I listed as assumption (2) of his analysis, i.e. that the sentence is used with the same semantics on the two occasions. However, since the minimalist makes the extra assumption that it is only the minimal meaning that is relevant to truth and falsity, it must be the case that the truth-conditions of the utterances are the same on both occasions, since the minimal meaning is the same on both occasions. If the minimalist accepts assumption (1) of Travis’s analysis, which is that the part of the world which is spoken of remains the same between the two occasions, it must therefore be the case, according to the minimalist, that the truth-conditions are fulfilled on the one occasion if they are fulfilled on the other. That is, it would follow that the utterances have the same truth-value, which would mean that Travis’s assumption (3) is to be rejected. There are probably ways for the minimalist to reject assumption (1). For instance, one could claim that different aspects of the world are spoken of on the two occasions; one aspect picking out the leaves with the paint and one picking out the leaves except for the paint. However, I assume that most minimalists would not like to say this, because of the metaphysical puzzles it would bring with it.¹⁸ So, assuming that minimalists do not endorse such a view, nor see other reasons to deny assumption (1), it seems as if the minimalist will deny assumption (3) in Travis’s analysis, and claim that both utterances have the same truth-value.

It is noteworthy that the minimalist does not reject assumption (2) of Travis’s analysis, which is that the sentence is used with the same semantics on both occasions. But the minimalist adds the further assumption that

¹⁸ One metaphysical problem is that it would seem to overpopulate the ontology if we have (at least) two objects – a leaf with the paint and a leaf without – for what we would intuitively think only to be one, namely the leaf. In addition, as Szabó (2001, p. 123-124) mentions, it may seem problematic due to the fact that two leaves get to occupy roughly the same spatio-temporal location, and that it would seem as if we, in painting a leaf, create a new one.

because the semantics or the minimal meaning is the same, the truth-conditions must be the same on the two occasions. (This is because it is the minimal meaning that is thought to be all that is relevant to determining the truth or falsity of an utterance.) It is precisely this move from sameness in meaning to sameness in truth-conditions that Travis takes his case to show that should not be made. For Travis, it is taken as given that the truth-conditions of the utterances must be different on the two occasions, because it is intuitive that the truth-values of the utterances differ. The minimalist, on the other hand, holds onto the idea that sameness of meaning goes together with sameness in truth-conditions, and concludes from this that the truth-values of the utterances must coincide. The three assumptions of the minimalist analysis corresponding to Travis's three assumptions are thus:

- (1') = (1) (World Invariance): The leaves that the sentence is used to speak of are the same on both occasions.
- (2') = (2) (Semantic Invariance): The sentence is on both occasions used with the following semantics: some leaves are spoken of as being green.
- (3') The utterance of 'The leaves are green' is true on both occasions.

In order to conclude that (3') from (2'), the minimalist relies on the further assumption

- (2'⁺) Two sentences have the same semantics if and only if they have the same truth-conditions.

So far, the minimalist analysis of the case is that exactly the same conditions obtain for both utterances. At least intuitively, however, there seems to be a difference between them, because of the different circumstances under which they are made – one involving Pia speaking after having painted the leaves, and one involving her speaking in reply to the botanist's request. But the minimalist need not deny that there is an intuitive difference. What minimalists would typically do is, loosely speaking, blame the difference

between the cases on the pragmatics, and insist that the pragmatics does not influence the semantics. As Borg (2010) writes:

[W]hen we hear [the sentence] as true relative to one context and false relative to another, with no change in the state of [the leaves], what we are sensitive to is ... the pragmatic speaker meaning the agent communicates, not the semantic content which gives the literal meaning of the sentence itself. (Borg 2010, p. 98.)

As Borg writes, we may hear the sentence as true on the one occasion and false on the other, but what we thus hear as true or false is ‘the pragmatic speaker meaning’. This kind of meaning, however, is not the kind that the truth and falsity of the utterance depends on; as indicated, the minimalist holds that truth and falsity is determined only on the basis of the minimal meaning. Despite appearances, therefore, both utterances are in fact true, the minimalist attempts to persuade us. On both occasions the leaves are green.

What one may find strange about the minimalist’s analysis is that utterances we can ‘hear as’ false in context can be determined in fact to be true. At least, this analysis is in need of some explanation as to what is meant by our hearing an utterance as having a different truth-value than what it in fact has. If the minimalist can provide a plausible account as to how the pragmatics of the occasion can make us hear the utterance as false when it is in fact true, we may be persuaded that the minimalist’s analysis is correct. As far as I know, the minimalists Borg (2004) and Cappelen and Lepore (2005) do not attempt to give such an explanation; they only argue for the negative claim that intuitions about what a speaker said cannot be a guide to semantics. They give various counterexamples and reasons as to why different ways of reporting using different sentences than the one used by the speaker in making the utterance fail to capture what the speaker said with the sentence (Cappelen and Lepore 2005, pp. 87-113; Borg 2004, pp. 114-127). I will not go into these arguments for the negative claim, as what I think is required is a positive account explaining why we have certain intuitions in the Travis case, although these intuitions should only be thought to influence the pragmatics of the case, and not the semantics and

the truth-values of the utterances. Instead, I will consider what Sainsbury (2001) says about the case with the green leaves, since his analysis of the case can be seen to provide the explanation Cappelen and Lepore, and Borg lack. That is, Sainsbury can be understood as giving an explanation as to why we may be tempted to hear one utterance as true and the other as false.

In essence, Sainsbury argues that what is on Travis's analysis taken to be a difference in the truth-conditions of the utterances is really just a difference in the *way* that the utterances are assumed to be made true. The thought that the sentence can be made true in different ways does not in itself conflict with Travis's analysis; in fact, the different understandings of sentences that Travis wants us to recognise can well be said to be the result of different ways of making the same meaning true. Sainsbury's thought, by way of contrast, is that the ways of making true do not influence the content that is relevant to determining the truth or falsity of the utterance, and hence do not influence the truth-value of the utterance either. It is whether this absence of influence of ways of being true on truth-evaluable content is well-supported or not that I will examine in the rest of this chapter. I will look at Sainsbury's analysis of Travis cases as the starting point for an analysis that minimalists could give, and then look at how the specific way in which Sainsbury spells out the analysis can be modified so as to make the minimalist position stronger.

2.2 Sainsbury's analysis

Let me start by presenting Sainsbury's analysis of the Travis case in more detail. Sainsbury gives his analysis with respect to a slightly different version of case than the case presented above. In Sainsbury's case 'The leaves are green' is also uttered about a brown leaf that has been painted green. However, on the first occasion one is surveying trees in an area and trying to determine whether defoliants have been used as a chemical weapon in that area, which, if they had, would make leaves brown. On the second occasion one is selecting camouflage material, and any green things will serve one's purpose. Sainsbury suggests that it is true on both occasions that

the leaves are green. His analysis of the utterance on the first occasion (which is the one Travis would claim is false) is that, because leaves are not normally painted but are the colour they look to be, one is led to believe that the truth of the utterance of 'The leaves are green' implies that the leaves are healthy. The implication that the leaves are healthy would be right to make had the utterance been made true in the standard way, i.e. by the leaves naturally being green. However, the utterance is not made true in the normal way, but in the exceptional way that the leaves are painted green. Sainsbury's thought seems to be that although it is true that the leaves are green, this is not relevant to the question or purposes pursued in the way that would be assumed if 'The leaves are green' was made true in the normal way, which does not take the possibility of the leaves having been painted into account. Therefore we are, as he puts it, led astray by truth.

If we transfer this analysis to the case I presented from Travis's 'Pragmatics', Sainsbury's analysis would be as follows. In the context of looking for a leaf to be the object of study in green-leaf chemistry, one is led astray by the truth of the utterance to think that it can be used for that purpose, although it cannot, because it does not contain chlorophyll. The reason as to why we are led astray by truth is that we assume that 'The leaves are green' is made true in the normal way, and thus we assume that the truth of the utterance implies that there is chlorophyll in the leaves. So we make a false inference. Despite the fact that we are led astray, however, it is right that the utterance is true; it is made true not in the normal way but in the exceptional way that the leaves are painted green.

One might find it strange to claim that the utterance is true on the occasion with the botanist – indeed, Travis assumes in his analysis that it is false. Sainsbury's reason for holding that it is true in both cases that the leaves are green connects with the general minimalist view that a sentence has a minimal meaning that is shared across all uses of it, and that since the minimal meaning is the only basis for determining truth and falsity, the truth-conditions of the sentence are the same across all uses too. In the sentence 'The leaves are green' Sainsbury suggests that it is the minimal

meaning of the word ‘green’ that makes it the case that the truth-conditions of the sentence can be made true in several ways. The condition that specifies what must be the case in order for the word ‘green’ to be applied truly is the condition that specifies the meaning of green, and this meaning is, as Sainsbury puts it, ‘unspecific’ with respect to how it is made true:

‘The meaning of ‘green’ is unspecific: there must be a green surface, but the meaning is indifferent to how deep the colour runs and how the surface got to be that colour’ (Sainsbury 2001, p. 403).

Thus ‘green’ can be used both to say truly of leaves that are green all the way through that they are green, as well as to say truly of leaves that have a green surface and are brown inside that they are green. It can also, on Sainsbury’s rendering of the unspecific meaning, be predicated truly of a surface that was painted green, as well as a surface that is green by nature. These are many different ways in which an utterance of ‘The leaves are green’ can be made true.

2.3 A different condition for the minimal meaning

Before I go on to spell out what the underlying idea in Sainsbury’s analysis is and why I think this idea is mistaken, I will mention one objection that Sainsbury’s account of the unspecific meaning is subject to, although I think this objection is not the decisive problem with the account in the present context. The objection I have in mind relates to the specific way in which Sainsbury renders the condition for the minimal meaning of ‘green’. It can be argued that Sainsbury’s condition excludes some cases where we would intuitively say that the predicate ‘green’ is truly applied. For instance, the condition on the meaning of ‘green’ as rendered above requires that there be a *surface* that is green, but perhaps ‘green’ can be used truly in cases where there is no surface having that colour, as when we see green Northern lights, or green fireworks. Perhaps there can also be a surface, but not a green one, and still we can use ‘green’ truly with respect to it, without stretching its meaning. For instance, there could be an art installation with surfaces having different colours, including white, and with only green light in the

room. In referring to one of the white surfaces I could say ‘That is green’, and I could be speaking truly. (I *would* be speaking truly if the occasion was that I was commenting on how the surface looks.) Or, in normal daylight, we could have a surface painted with small blue and yellow dots, so that when pointing to it from sufficiently far away I could speak truly in uttering ‘That is green’. So there are cases in which although Sainsbury’s condition for the unspecific meaning of ‘green’ is not met, one may be inclined to think that ‘That is green’ can be uttered truly. Hence there may be cases that Sainsbury’s condition rules out, which it should not.

Now, it is of course possible that refinements to Sainsbury’s condition could be made so that it does not exclude cases that it should intuitively include, but the possibility of making such refinements is not one I will discuss here.¹⁹ Instead, if one finds Sainsbury’s rendering of the minimal meaning of ‘green’ objectionable due to the sort of considerations mentioned, Sainsbury’s analysis of the Travis case can still be run, but with a way of rendering the meaning of ‘green’ that is immune to the kind of problems that we saw Sainsbury’s condition meets. Instead of Sainsbury’s condition, one can simply put the condition

(M) x is ‘green’ if and only if x is green.

This way of giving the condition for when the predicate applies is favoured by Cappelen and Lepore (2005) and Borg (2004). According to them, the minimal meaning shared by all utterances of a sentence S is given on the form of Tarski’s convention T, i.e. “‘S’ is true if and only if S”. When the minimal meaning of ‘green’ is given as in (M), it cannot be objected that (M) excludes cases where the predicate seems to be capable of being applied truly. (M) gives us no conditions that need to be met, except that the referent in question, x, needs to be green, and so, if there is a case where we

¹⁹ However, the argument I discuss in the chapter to follow for there being indefinitely many possible understandings of a given expression rules out the possibility of giving a Sainsbury-style condition for the meaning of ‘green’, since there can always, according to that argument, be new uses of the word ‘green’ – uses that any condition specifying truth-conditions for the previous uses may fail to encompass.

intuitively think that we have a green referent, then the condition is met, i.e. the referent, *x*, is green. Hence, no cases that we intuitively think should be included can be left out by condition (M).

With respect to these ways of giving the meaning of ‘green’, however, we should note that Travis could also accept condition (M) as giving the meaning of ‘green’. On this condition, it is left open what it is to be green; this is to be determined on the various occasions where the word is used. However, it is important to be clear that for Travis this meaning that it is uncontroversial to say that ‘green’ has, is not a meaning that is shared across all utterances where ‘green’ is used. For, as we saw in the last chapter, Travis takes it to follow from his case that the contribution meanings of words make to truth-conditions of utterances which contain them can vary. The meaning that a word has is thus better understood as something that is *similar* across uses, but not as something that is exactly the same for Travis. I mention this, in particular, because Borg writes that a ‘point of agreement between minimalism and occasionalism [which is what she calls Travis’s position] ... concerns the kind of content which can be recovered independently from a context of utterance’ (Borg 2010, p. 110). She also writes that Travis would agree that there is a determinable content to be had from the meaning of words independently of when they are used, with the only difference being that minimalists think such content is truth-evaluable, while Travis does not. But although Borg is careful not to say that there is a determinable, but only a determinate, content that can be recovered independently of use, I think the minimalist would have to say that it is determinate. At least, I think the minimalist would say that the minimal meaning is a content we can grasp in thought, i.e. that it is a possible way to think. But this is just what Travis denies. As Borg also quotes Travis: ‘Being a grunter on no particular understanding of being one is just not a way... to be’ (Travis 2008a, p. 159). Borg takes this quote to be a denial that the meaning of ‘being a grunter’, independently of context, gives us a truth-evaluable content. But I think what Travis is denying here is that there is a content at all. So although it is possible both for the minimalist and for Travis to say that, for instance, ‘green’ means green, what Travis would

mean by this is very different from what a minimalist would mean, since, for Travis, the meaning does not determine an understanding and therefore neither a possible way to think.

2.4 An implicit principle in Sainsbury's analysis

The role that the condition that specifies the minimal meaning of 'green' plays in Sainsbury's analysis of the Travis case is, as I mentioned, to serve as the justification as to why he claims that the utterance of 'The leaves are green' is true in both cases. Since it is the same minimal meaning that is in play on both occasions, the utterances have the same truth-value according to Sainsbury; the only difference being the way in which the utterances are made true. That is, both utterances are true because the condition that specifies the meaning of 'green' is a condition that obtains on both occasions. However, the more minimal version of the minimal meaning of 'green', as stated in (M), can also serve as a justification as to why both of the utterances are true in the same way as Sainsbury's condition does. Hence (M) can replace Sainsbury's condition for the minimal meaning, whilst other parts of Sainsbury's analysis are retained. The difference from Sainsbury's original analysis will only be that cases that his condition for the minimal meaning of 'green' may exclude will be included by (M); for example, such cases as green fireworks or white surfaces in green light. So if one finds the objections that Sainsbury's condition is subject to compelling or disturbing, the same analysis can still be run, but with (M) having the function that Sainsbury's condition does in the original version of the analysis, where that function is to deliver the verdict that both utterances are true.

Recall that the central claim in Sainsbury's analysis of the Travis case is that what we may intuitively think are differences in truth-value between the cases are really only differences in the ways we assume that the utterances are made true. We are now starting to see what Sainsbury means by this. Regardless of which version of the condition of the minimal meaning of 'green' one might think best, we see that it is because the minimal meaning

allows for different ways that something can qualify as green that there are different ways of making the sentence ‘The leaves are green’ true. Because the meaning of the sentence is given in terms of either Sainsbury’s condition or condition (M), the meaning is invariant across the two utterances, and what varies is the way in which the condition is satisfied or the way in which we assume that the condition is satisfied, where the different ways in which the condition can be satisfied constitute the different ways that the sentence is made true on the two occasions.

Now, in the Travis case, according to Sainsbury’s analysis, it is in fact the same way of making the utterance true that is in play on both occasions. However, Sainsbury seems to think that if we believe that the utterances have different truth-values, as we do if we accept Travis’s analysis, we are not assuming that the utterances are made true in the same way, although they in fact are. On the occasion with the botanist we must be assuming that the utterance is made true in the normal way (by the leaves containing chlorophyll), while it is in fact made true in the exceptional way (by the leaves being painted green). It is when we make this assumption that we are ‘led astray by truth’, as Sainsbury puts it, and he seems to be thinking that it is because we are thus led astray that we may be tempted to conclude that the utterance on the occasion with the botanist is false.

What I would like to point out about Sainsbury’s analysis is that because his claim that the utterances are true on both occasions is made on the basis that the meaning of ‘green’ is given by a condition that can be satisfied in several ways, the claim presupposes acceptance of a certain principle concerning truth-making. The principle is as follows:

(Sufficiency): If the condition that specifies the minimal meaning of a constituent expression of a sentence S is satisfied (by the relevant referent) *in one way or the other*, then S is true.

In other words, the principle is that in order for the utterance to be true *any* way of meeting the condition on the minimal meaning will do. With regard

to Sainsbury's analysis of the Travis case, we see that the sufficiency principle is manifest in the minimalist's reasoning in that Pia's utterance of 'The leaves are green' as an aesthetic remark is made true by the leaves being painted green, and it is also in this way that her utterance of the 'The leaves are green' to the botanist is made true. So the utterance is true on the occasion with the botanist, although the utterance is not made true by the leaves being green by containing chlorophyll. It is sufficient for the truth of the utterance, the minimalist must think, that the condition that constitutes the minimal meaning of the sentence is satisfied in some way or other; in this case, by the leaves being painted green.

2.5 Rejection of the sufficiency principle

The sufficiency principle may at first seem perfectly reasonable, but I will try to show that it is in fact not. The principle may seem reasonable if we think about a case where an utterance of the sentence 'The leaves are green' is (on a minimalist story) made true in the way that we also assume it is, i.e. in a case where we are not 'led astray by truth'. For instance, if the sentence is made true in the 'normal' way, i.e. by the leaves being green by nature, it may seem like a perfectly sensible view to have that the utterance is true, although there are ways in which it could have been made true that the leaves are green that are not actualised – for instance, that the utterance is not made true by the leaves being painted green. It seems unreasonable to require that in order for the utterance to be true, the leaves in question must be green by nature, and be painted green, and be illuminated by green light, and be dyed green, and be seen through green spectacles, and have a fluorescent cover that can be seen to glow green under dark viewing conditions, and who knows what not else. The fact that quite a few of these conditions fail to obtain does not seem to make the utterance false. Indeed, for an utterance to be false seems to be for it to fail to be true; falsity obtains where there is absence of a truth-maker. It may be the observation of this asymmetry between truth and falsity that is the driving force which makes the minimalist presuppose the sufficiency principle, as it seems that if falsity is the absence of a truth-maker, it would be sufficient that the utterance is

made true in one way or other for it to be true. However, this does not quite follow from the observation of the asymmetry between truth and falsity. To agree that it is unreasonable to require that all of the mentioned conditions obtain in order for the utterance to be true is not to agree that it is reasonable to require only that *any* one of the conditions obtain. Although it may be sufficient that only one way of making the utterance true obtains, there may be restrictions on which one of the ways of making true that must obtain. There may be one particular way of making the utterance true that is relevant on the occasion in question.

It is in cases where we are what Sainsbury calls ‘led astray by truth’, which are cases where the assumptions we make about how an utterance is made true differ from the way in which the minimalist claims it is in fact made true, that there is potential for there to be a conflict between what the sufficiency principle dictates about the truth-value and what we may be ‘led astray’ to believe based on what the minimalist would claim to be our mistaken assumptions. The occasion with the botanist in the Travis case is a case like this. Although it is made true in what Sainsbury calls ‘the exceptional way’ that the leaves are green, i.e. it is made true by them being painted green, it is not made true in the ‘normal way’, i.e. by them being green by nature. But in my view it seems to be the latter way of making the utterance true that is *relevant* or *required* on the occasion. It seems to be the absence of this way of making the speaking true that makes it false. It would be sufficient for making the utterance true that the leaves were green because they contained chlorophyll, and I agree with the minimalist that it would not *also* be required that they were painted green, as well as seen in green light etc. in order for the utterance to be true. But the occasion requires that there is one way of making the utterance true that obtains, namely that it is true in virtue of the leaves containing chlorophyll, as it will simply not do for botanical purposes that the leaves are painted green – that is irrelevant. What I am claiming, then, is that the minimalist is right in that one way of making the utterance true is sufficient, but I add that it is necessary that it is made true in one particular way among the ways for which the minimal meaning allows, where which way this must be depends

on the occasion. This does not mean that the relation between truth and falsity is symmetric, since it also on my claim is thought that the lack of the relevant way in which the utterance is made true constitutes the lack of a truth-maker, and that an utterance for which we lack a truth-maker is false.

2.5.1. An example from Barwise and Etchemendy

One may find that the above considerations give plausibility to the claim that among the many ways of making true that the minimalist suggests there is only one that is relevant on any given occasion. I think further reason to think so may be added by noting a likeness my claim has to a certain way of thinking about an example that Barwise and Etchemendy (1987) use in their book, *The Liar*, which they describe in the following way.

We might imagine [...] that there are two card games going on, one across town from the other: Max is playing cards with Emily and Sophie, and Claire is playing cards with Dana. Suppose someone watching the former game mistakes Emily for Claire, and claims that Claire has the three of clubs. She would be wrong, on the Austinian account, even if Claire had the three of clubs across town. On the Russellian account, though, the claim would be true. (ibid., p. 121.)

What Barwise and Etchemendy refer to as the Austinian and the Russellian accounts correspond to Travis's view and what I earlier have been calling the standard picture of language use. According to the Austinian account, the speaker is describing a limited part of the world (a state of affairs, as I in the previous chapter mentioned that Austin calls it), namely the card game before him or her. On this account, the utterance is neither true nor false; it is wrong or it 'fails', Barwise and Etchemendy write (ibid., p. 29). According to the Russellian account, on the other hand, the speaker is describing Claire, and the utterance is true because, if we could scan through the world, we would find Claire who has the three of clubs. So according to the Austinian account there is one particular part of the world that is relevant to the truth of the utterance. According to the Russellian account, by contrast, there is no such limitation, and any part of the world will do as a truth-maker.

The analogy between this and the minimalist's sufficiency principle is that like the Austinian claims that there is one particular part of the world that is relevant to truth and falsity, I am claiming that there is one particular way of making true that is relevant to truth and falsity on any given occasion. Like Barwise and Ethcembury's Russellian claims that there is no such limitation on which part of the world that makes the utterance true, the minimalist claims that there is no limitation on the way in which the utterance is made true. To the extent that one agrees that we would have the intuition in the card case that the utterance fails and is neither true nor false, it seems one must be agreeing that there is one part of the world that is relevant to the truth and falsity of the utterance rather than any other. And by analogy with the discussion about the sufficiency principle one should accordingly agree that it is plausible there must be one way of making the utterance 'The leaves are green' true that is relevant rather than any other. There is of course a disanalogy in that the minimalist agrees that it is the same part of the world that is relevant to truth on both occasions where 'The leaves are green' is uttered, while the Russellian does not. But even if one thinks the analogy halts in this respect, I think that having the intuition that there can be one part of the world that is relevant to truth in the card case at least should make one more open to, if not fully convinced of, the idea that there might be one particular way of making the utterance true that is relevant in the case with the leaves.

It may be the case that not everyone will have the intuition in the card example that the speaker does not say something true (where absence of truth here does not imply that the speaker said something false²⁰), and for those who do not, the above reasoning will be unconvincing. However, I

²⁰ Also Travis thinks that there can be cases where speakings fail to be either true or false. He writes that there can be cases where 'Everything about the way the thing described is makes it equally well, and no more, the sort of thing the descriptions used describes (on the understanding on which it was used) as not that sort of thing at all' (Travis 2008a, p. 138). Travis calls this phenomenon '*isostheneia*'. As an example to illustrate the phenomenon Travis mentions an example from Austin. In a case where someone is lying dead at home, and a speaker says that that person is at home where neither the speaker or the participants anticipates that the person is dead, Travis claims that the speaker's utterance it is neither true nor false. Although different in many respects, perhaps the card example could qualify as a case of *isostheneia*.

think that there is an internal problem with Sainsbury's account that points to a rejection of the sufficiency principle.

2.5.2 An internal problem with Sainsbury's account

On Sainsbury's account, the basis for the claim that we are led astray by truth is that we make the normal assumption about how the utterance is made true, where the normal assumption is that the leaves are green as a result of containing chlorophyll. Thus, the explanation that Sainsbury's account provides as to why we, as Borg puts it, 'hear' Pia's utterance to the botanist as false is that we make the normal assumption. However, in a different part of his paper, Sainsbury remarks that, although we often make normal assumptions about how meanings are made true, we have no difficulty with seeing that there can be exceptional ways in which a meaning is made true too. The central example Sainsbury uses is that we normally assume that 'John smokes' is made true by John smoking cigarettes or the like, and not by him frequently smoking salmon in his chimney or himself emitting smoke (Sainsbury 2001, p. 403). But Sainsbury thinks that, although we usually make such assumptions, there is nothing in the meaning of 'smokes' that dictates that such assumptions *must* be made, and there can be cases in which we recognise this.

With this in mind, the question I find it hard to see how the minimalist can answer, without at the same time putting limitations on which way an utterance must be made true and thereby rejecting the sufficiency principle, is the following. Why is the occasion where Pia talks to her botanist friend an occasion on which one does not realise that the normal assumptions fail to hold? Why do we or must we make normal assumptions about how the utterance is made true, if we on other occasions make the extraordinary assumption that utterances of 'The leaves are green' is made true because the leaves are painted green?

The minimalist could try to say that the reason as to why we must be making normal assumptions on the occasion where Pia talks to the botanist

is that the botanist does not know that Pia has painted the leaves. From the botanist's perspective, therefore, normal assumptions about how 'The leaves are green' is made true are likely to be made. Let us say, however, that the botanist had been informed that the leaves on Pia's maple have been painted green, but called to ask anyway (perhaps to test if Pia would attempt to trick him). In this event, the botanist will be making the extraordinary assumption about how Pia's utterance is made true, and he will not be led astray by truth. Even so, I think we would 'hear' Pia's utterance as false in this case. So even though the botanist is not personally led astray by truth in this case, competent speakers are. Hence, the assumptions that the botanist makes or not makes cannot be the reason as to why we have certain intuitions about the case.

Perhaps the minimalist could claim that it is the speaker's assumptions that count. Attributing a charitable interpretation of what Pia is up to in the example, one could assume that rather than speaking misleadingly on purpose, Pia forgot that she had painted the leaves, so that she also herself makes normal assumptions about how her utterance is made true. Or, we can consider a case where it was someone who did not know that Pia had painted the leaves who answered the phone, and uttered 'The leaves are green', and in doing so made normal assumptions. However, also in these cases, it seems to me that we would 'hear' the utterance as false. Indeed, it seems that even in a case where Pia is misleading the botanist on purpose, and the botanist, on his part, calls to test her character – i.e. a case in which both make the extraordinary assumption – we would 'hear' the utterance as false.

What I am trying to show by considering these twists of the example is that whether the speaker or the botanist makes normal or exceptional assumptions about how 'The leaves are green' is made true does not make a difference to the fact that we would 'hear' it as false. Although it is obvious that the twists of the example are relevant to whether the speaker lies, or misleads, or is sincerely trying to be helpful to the botanist (i.e. to what additional illocutionary acts are performed with the speaking), they seem to

make no difference to the fact that we ‘hear’ the utterance as true or, alternatively, that we are led astray by truth, and hence neither to what assumptions we must be making about how the utterance is made true. What we are after when we ask about truth or falsity is not what will be taken to be true from one perspective or another, but simply what is true, or what one (as in ‘anyone’) should claim to be true. So the minimalist can appeal to neither what the botanist assumes about the truth of the utterance nor to what Pia, the speaker, assumes. However, the minimalist may have some other account as to why we make normal assumptions. Perhaps the minimalist would like to say that there is a complicated story to be told on each occasion as to why we make the assumptions we do – a story that appeals to features of the context, such as the preceding conversation and the aims and purposes of the participants, where which features are relevant to explaining why we make the assumptions we do varies from occasion to occasion.

The important point for my purposes, however, is that whatever account the minimalist wants to give of why we make normal assumptions about how the utterance is made true, an account *is* required. It is required because, as aforementioned, there can be occasions where we do not make normal assumptions and the utterance is made true in an exceptional way. Furthermore, the reason he or she gives will have to be one that delivers the result that *everyone*, i.e. every competent speaker presented with the case, will make this assumption. For if the minimalist is relying on Sainsbury’s analysis to explain the intuitive difference between the two occasions of the Travis case, this explanation must seek to explain intuitions that we all, or at least most of us, have, and so it would be insufficient if it was only the botanist or the speaker who made this assumption – unless, of course, the fact that they did so had the effect that we all would, which we above saw is not the case.

But now, if an account as to why we would all assume that the utterance is made true in the normal way were provided, then why is this not the way that the utterance must be made true in order to be so? It seems to me that if

why we assume that the utterance, in so far that we think it is true, is made true in a certain way is accounted for, then this must also be an account as to why there is one way of making the utterance true, namely the way that we all assume, that is privileged. The minimalist must claim that we are all wrong in the assumption we make about how the utterance, if true, is made true, but what is the reason for this claim? What authority tells us that we are all wrong? If it were possible for the minimalist to claim that not every competent speaker would make the normal assumption in the case where Pia speaks to the botanist, and there were several assumptions about how the utterance is made true that it would be possible to make, so that there was not one intuition about how we ‘hear’ the utterance, then there could be reason to claim that all the assumptions one can make are possible ways in which the utterance can be made true. But since, as I have argued, the minimalist must presuppose that (more or less) everyone assumes the same about how the utterance, if true, is made true, the myriad of other ways in which the minimalist claims that the minimal meaning can be satisfied and the utterance made true are ways that persons, when presented with the case, just would not consider to be a way for the utterance to be true. There is just one of the ways that the minimalist thinks it possible that we would assume to be the way that the utterance is made true, if we indeed assume that to be the case.

If I am right that the minimalist cannot give an account as to why we all assume the same about how an utterance is made true in a case where we, allegedly, are ‘led astray by truth’, without this also being an account as to why that way of being true is the only way the utterance can be made true, then the sufficiency principle cannot be upheld by the minimalist. And if the sufficiency principle is in danger, so is Sainsbury’s analysis, and with that, the possible rescue it can provide for the minimalist analysis of the Travis case. Sainsbury’s analysis was meant to serve as an explanation as to why we, as the minimalist claims, can ‘hear’ Pia’s utterance to the botanist as true when it in fact is not. The explanation was that we assume that the utterance must be made true in the normal way, when, in fact, it is only made true in an exceptional way. But whatever reason there is for claiming

that we must make that assumption, I argued, must also be a reason for why that is the only way in which the utterance can be made true. So whatever account is given will be an account that denies the sufficiency principle. But without the sufficiency principle, Sainsbury's dichotomy between the way in which we assume that the utterance is made true and the way in which it is in fact made true collapses. With this collapse, the explanation as to why we can 'hear' the utterance as false while it in fact is true is undermined. So Sainsbury's analysis cannot come to the minimalist's rescue. In fact, it seems as if the possibility of the utterance being true but us being 'led astray by truth' or 'hearing' the utterance as false cannot exist if an account as to why we all have the same intuition that the utterance is false can be given, since, as I argued, this account would also be an account as to why there is only one way that the utterance can be made true. So even if the minimalist does not embrace Sainsbury's analysis as an explanation, it seems as if *any* explanation the minimalist could give as to why we 'hear' an utterance as false when it is in fact true will be an account that undermines that very claim.

2.6 Conclusion

The argument of this chapter has not been straightforward, so a summary is in good order. The analysis of the Travis case that a minimalist would give, I suggested, would be that assumption (3') – that the utterances of 'The leaves are green' have the same truth-values – should be denied. In order to explain the intuitive difference between the two occasions, however, the minimalist needs to account for how we can hear the utterance as false on the occasion with the botanist, although it is in fact true. Sainsbury's account of this consists in differentiating between different ways in which the utterance can be made true, and he explains that there can be one way in which the utterance is in fact made true that can differ from the way in which we assume that the utterance is made true. It was the minimal meaning of the sentence, we saw, that opens for the possibility that there are different ways in which the utterance can be made true, and different accounts of the minimal meaning of the sentence could be used as part of

Sainsbury's explanation, if Sainsbury's account of the minimal meaning is thought problematic. However, there was shown to be a principle – the sufficiency principle, as I called it – underlying Sainsbury's explanation, that should be rejected. The sufficiency principle is that it is sufficient in order for an utterance to be true that any of the ways of making it true that the minimal meaning allows for, is satisfied. I claimed that it seems plausible to think that it is only one of the ways of making the utterance true that is relevant on any given occasion. The card example from Barwise and Etchemendy could be seen to give a reason for thinking that this is plausible, if one has the intuition that the utterance of 'Claire has the three of clubs' fails in this example. The decisive reason as to why the principle must be rejected, however, I argued, is that Sainsbury, as well as the minimalist, must presuppose that everyone assumes that the utterance to the botanist must be made true in a way which, according to the minimalist and Sainsbury, it is not, in order to account for the fact that we have the intuition that there is something different about the occasion with the botanist. But if everyone must assume that the utterance must be made true in this way, then, whatever account one gives as to why this is so, it seems this must also be an account as to why this way of making the utterance true is privileged. With one privileged way of making the utterance true, the sufficiency principle is rejected. And without the sufficiency principle, Sainsbury's explanation of the difference in intuitions between the two occasions of the Travis case collapses. In fact, so does the minimalist analysis. The conclusion, therefore, is not only that Sainsbury's analysis cannot be used as the explanation that the minimalist analysis needs, but that such an explanation cannot be given, and that the minimalist analysis for this reason fails as an analysis of the Travis case.

Chapter 3: Indexical Analyses

In this chapter I will consider two kinds of analyses of Travis cases that have in common that they presuppose what I described as the indexicality view of context-sensitivity in the Introduction. The analyses advocated by Szabó (2001) and Sainsbury (2001) are instances of the indexical view that postulates parameters in the logical form of expressions, while Rothschild and Segal's (2009) analysis seeks to explain the Travis case by involving simple indexicals. All analyses argue for an expansion of the expressions that are traditionally considered to be indexical expressions, and hence the views they advocate are instances of what I called the moderate view in the Introduction, although the only kind of context-sensitivity that is thought to be in question is indexicality, and not any kind of ambiguity. Because they think that there only is a limited number of context-sensitive expressions, it is presupposed by all analyses that the phenomenon that the Travis case exhibits only occurs for certain expressions, and does not, as Travis thinks, concern all language use.

The plan for the chapter is straightforward. Firstly, I present the indexical analyses of the Travis case. I then, in section two and three, turn to two arguments given by Travis and that I use to show why the indexical analyses are problematic. The first argument defeats only Szabó's and Sainsbury's analyses, but it appears that the argument is also important to block a move Rothschild and Segal could make in order to avoid the objection from the second argument.

3.1 The indexical analyses and the Travis case

Sainsbury, Szabó, and Rothschild and Segal are all concerned with defending a principle about compositionality. One could argue for a principle about compositionality according to which the meaning of the *sentence* is composed only from the meaning that the constituent expressions have in abstraction from their use on any particular occasion (the minimal meaning of the expressions, as we have seen that the

minimalists call it) and the structure of the sentence. The principle of compositionality that is defended by indexical approaches, by contrast, involve that the content of the *utterance* is composed only from the content that constituent expressions of the sentence used to make the utterance have on that very occasion of use and the structure of the speech-act. Borrowing Szabó's labels, I will refer to the former kind of compositionality principle as one that concerns expression content and the latter kind as one that concerns speech-act content. Here, I think we can think of the speech-act content of an utterance as corresponding to what Travis calls the understanding of a sentence on an occasion of use, since the speech-act content, like the understanding of the sentence, is that which both Travis's view and the indexical approaches hold to be evaluated for truth and falsity. A different way of framing the difference between the two kinds of compositionality principles is to say, as Rothschild and Segal do, that the compositionality of expression content relates to sentence types, while the compositionality of speech-act content relates to sentence tokens, i.e. to utterances.

All of the analyses to be presented, then, are put forward in order to attempt to show that although Travis cases may be thought to be counterexamples to a principle about the compositionality of speech-act content, they are in fact not. Common among the reasons they give as to why compositionality is not threatened by such counterexamples is that all the difference there is between the two utterances of the sentence 'The leaves are green' on the two occasions stems from the different content that the predicate 'green' acquires on the two occasions, i.e. it only stems from the speech-act content of the expression 'green'. Thus, they attempt to rescue a principle about compositionality by locating the difference in just one of the constituents of the utterance. The accounts share a reliance on the explanatory assumption that if indexicality is consistent with compositionality, then it must be consistent with their analysis too. However, when it comes to the particular way in which it is envisaged that the change in the speech-act content of the predicate takes place and in what way the predicate is an indexical, the

accounts offer different explanations. I will now briefly present these different explanations.

Rothschild and Segal's explanation of how the speech-act content of the expression 'green' is responsible for the difference between the occasions is that 'green' is what they call an indexical predicate. Like indexicals, the predicate 'green', changes its extension from one context to another, according to Rothschild and Segal. Thus, with respect to Travis cases, they claim that the reason as to why the utterances have different truth-values is that on the one occasion the leaves are within the extension of the predicate and on the other not. Precisely how the extension of the predicate gets determined in a context where it is used is something Rothschild and Segal see no need to account for. They think indexical predicates to be more like the indexical 'that' than indexicals like 'I' and 'now'. For the two latter it is often thought that there can be specified a rule or function that determines the extension or referent of the indexical in a context where it is used – for instance, the referent of I can be thought to be determined by something like the rule "I" in utterance u refers to x if and only if x is the speaker of u'²¹. For the indexical 'that', by contrast, the referent is often thought to be determined in no uniform way, and this is how it is for indexical predicates too, Rothschild and Segal claim. They further claim that it is a task that lies outside the area of formal semantics to provide an account of how the extension of indexical predicates – and other indexicals, for that matter – is determined. However, given that a token 'green_j' of the indexical predicate 'green' in the j-the context has a certain extension, Rothschild and Segal claim that the semantics of this context-bound token just is that extension. Since the tokens of 'green' that occur in Pia's utterances when she is commenting on the looks of the leaves and when she is speaking to the botanist have different extensions, they therefore also have different semantics, according to Rothschild and Segal. In turn, the semantics of the indexical predicate type 'green' is given by a function from contexts to the extensions that the particular tokens 'green_j', 'green_k', etc., of it can have.

²¹ It should be mentioned that assuming that the reference of "I" can be understood in terms of a reference rule is highly controversial.

Also Szabó's analysis of why the speech-act content of 'green' differs between the two occasions of the Travis case involves that the semantics of the predicate 'green' is such that different tokens of it can include the leaves on one occasion but not on the other. Szabó argues that 'green' is what he calls an incomplete scalar adjective. Of other incomplete scalar adjectives he mentions 'tall', 'heavy', 'fast', 'expensive' and 'old', where these adjectives have in common that they require that a comparison class be determined from the context in order for the adjective to be made complete. For instance, it must be determined whether 'tall' is used to talk about the comparison class 'basketball players' or the comparison class 'four-year olds'.²² For 'green' in particular, Szabó suggests that the logical form is '(green (C, P)) (x)', where the variable 'C' stands for a comparison class and the variable 'P' stands for a certain part of the object (the part that in the context needs to be green).

This account of 'green' is analogous to the account that Sainsbury (2001) gives of a Travis case where, instead of it being leaves and their colour that are in question, it is squash balls and their shape that is. While Sainsbury thinks that the analysis discussed in the previous chapter is appropriate for 'The leaves are green' case, he thinks that this analysis cannot be given for a Travis case where the sentence 'The ball is round' is uttered, first, as a remark about what kinds of ball is used in squash and, second, as a remark about the shape of a squash ball when it is deformed into an ovoid on rebound.²³ For the latter case, Sainsbury thinks the appropriate analysis is that there is a hidden time variable that attaches to the expression 'is round', or, in general to predicate ascriptions on the form 'is Φ ', such that the logical form of the expression is 'is Φ for at least t ', where t is a stretch of time (Sainsbury 2001, p. 403-404). Like Szabó, therefore, he thinks that the difference in truth-value can be explained by there being a variable in the

²² Incompleteness in adjectives has several dimensions, according to Szabó. One is scalar adjectives, which, as explained, require a comparison class for their interpretation. Another is evaluative adjectives, like 'lucky', 'delicious', 'simple', which for their interpretation require that the context provides 'an individual or group of individuals from whose perspective the evaluation is made' (Szabó 2001, p. 136).

²³ See Travis 2008a, pp. 97-98 for his discussion of the example.

logical form that takes on different values on the two occasions of a Travis case.

Despite their different explanations as to how the semantics of ‘green’ is working, we can give a common summary of the analyses that Rothschild and Segal, Szabó and partly also Sainsbury give. We have seen that they all agree that the speech-act content of the utterances differs between the two occasions of the Travis case, as it is this fact they seek to explain in a way that is not in opposition to a principle about the compositionality of speech-act content. In addition, they all presuppose in their analyses that it is the same leaves that are spoken of, and they also seem to think that the truth-value of the utterances differ, as it is these facts that can make one assume that the utterances are used to say distinguishable things, i.e. have different speech-act contents. Thus, their analyses have in common with Travis’s analysis that what I formulated as assumption (1) and (3) in chapter one hold. However, it is disputable whether they accept assumption (2), which is that the sentences are used with the same semantics on the two occasions. On the one hand, as we have seen, Rothschild and Segal claim that the semantics of ‘green’ as it is used on an occasion – the semantics of a token ‘green_j’ – is its extension, which they claim changes between the two occasions. If it is this notion of semantics that is in question in assumption (2), then Rothschild and Segal deny it. On the other hand, they think that ‘green’ can be given a context-independent semantics based on the semantics of its context-bound tokens. If this is the notion of semantics that is in question in assumption (2), then it would seem as if they agree to the assumption. So, which notion is in question?

Szabó points out that in order for the Travis case to be understood as a counterexample to compositionality of speech-act content, it must be former notion of ‘semantics’ or ‘meaning’ that is understood to be assumed in Travis’s analysis. For the dialectic to make sense, the defender of compositionality of speech-act content must assume that when Travis is claiming that the words are ‘used so as to mean what they do mean in English’ (Travis 1994, p. 171), he is referring to the speech-act content of

the words. If he was only referring to the expression content of the words, then compositionality of speech-act content could be true although compositionality of expression content were not, and the Travis case would not be a problem for the former compositionality principle. For instance, it is consistent with the compositionality of speech-act content that the indexical ‘I’ has the same expression content in all contexts; what would be problematic is if there could be cases where ‘I’ had the same speech-act content, i.e. referred to the same person, in two utterances of the same sentence which differed in their truth-values.

We should note that also from Sainsbury’s discussion it seems likely that it is the reading of assumption (2) such that this assumption concerns speech-act content that must be argued not to hold. As we saw in the previous chapter, Sainsbury accepts assumption (2) on the reading where it concerns the expression content of the words used. In this regard, one might think that this is the reading he is presupposing also in his discussion of the Travis case with the squash ball. However, his explanation in terms of indexicality of ‘is Φ ’ is an explanation that postulates a difference in speech-act content without a difference in expression content. Hence, if he thinks this explanation is necessary in order to show that the Travis case with squash ball is not a counterexample to compositionality, he must, for the reason that we saw Szabó notes, be assuming that it is the compositionality of speech-act content that could be violated by this Travis case, since the compositionality of expression content is not.

This suggests that the three assumptions that Szabó, Sainsbury and Rothschild and Segal are making in their analyses, corresponding to the assumptions that I presented Travis as making, are the following.

- (1’’) = (1) (World Invariance): The leaves that the sentence is used to speak of are the same on both occasions.
- (2’’) The semantics of ‘green’ differs between the two occasions, in the sense that the speech-act content of the expression differs.

(3'') = (3) (Truth-value Variation): The utterance of 'The leaves are green' is false on occasion and true on the other.

Despite the variation among their particular accounts of how the semantics, i.e. speech-act content, of 'green' differs between the two occasions, the analyses have in common that they postulate that there is an indexical account to be given, and that such an account explains the difference in content and truth-value of the utterances of 'The leaves are green' on the two occasions.

3.2 Travis's argument from the indefiniteness of the number of possible understandings

Plausible as the presented analyses may seem, there is a point Travis makes which, if right, in fact makes them seem quite implausible. This section is an attempt to show how. The point Travis makes that I have in mind comes in two versions, associated with two kinds of examples, where the different versions are used for different argumentative purposes by him. In this context, however, both versions of the point work towards the same conclusion, i.e. that the indexical analyses are implausible. I start with presenting some representative examples belonging to each version of the point.

Understandings of expressions. The first kind of examples Travis gives are meant to show that there can arise understandings of an expression that it has not previously bore. A good example which Travis gives to illustrate this is the various understandings he envisages of 'There is red meat on the white rug'.²⁴ The example is that kidneys wrapped in butcher paper have been dropped on someone's white rug. Whether this counts as an instance of there being red meat on the white rug depends on whether kidneys are to count as meat in the context; they can do so in virtue of being the meat for the Sunday brunch, but also not count as meat because they are not muscle, and therefore be categorised as offal rather than meat. Further, whether there

²⁴ The example is from Travis 2008b, p. 16.

is red meat on the white rug depends on whether the fact that the meat or the offal is wrapped in paper counts as it being on the rug; it might count as being on the rug in virtue of that being where it is, or, on a different understanding, only the paper may count as being on the rug, with the kidneys or the meat being in the paper. In addition to these four choices of understandings of being meat and being on the rug, there are also some very different understandings of the sentence that are possible. For instance, as Travis mentions (2008b, p. 26), there is an understanding of the sentence to be had when Mary's lamb, which is destined to be eaten, is lying on the rug. Or again, the sentence bears yet another understanding if spoken when Sid is standing on the rug with his belly full of sirloin.

Understandings of understandings. The second kind of examples are meant to show that even when an expression bears a certain understanding, there can arise understandings of that understanding. One example Travis uses is that of having some ink that is black in fluid form, but which writes blue.²⁵ As with the meat on the rug example, the ink may in some cases count as blue and in some cases not, and this gives rise to two different understandings. However, let us say that we have an understanding of the case where 'The ink is blue' counts as true only if the ink writes blue. Even on this understanding, however, there may be a sub-division into two understandings. For what are we to say, Travis asks, if the ink writes blue, but then slowly disappears? Is this ink blue, given that ink is blue if it writes blue? Again, there seems to be two understandings, given the understanding that the ink is blue if it writes blue. On one such sub-understanding it is blue, and on another it is not (it is transparent). As Travis puts it, 'understandings may admit of understandings' (ibid., p. 135).

One general point Travis wants to establish by putting forward these examples seems to be that '[t]here is no reason to think that there is any limit to possible understandings' (ibid., p. 113). It can always happen that an expression bears an understanding that it has not previously bore, or that an

²⁵ See Travis 2008a, p. 135 for this example.

understanding admits of an understanding that it has not previously admitted of in any context. What are the implications of this conclusion for the ways of explaining Travis cases that were presented in the previous section?

Let us first look at the implications for Szabó's and Sainsbury's accounts. We saw that they have in common that they postulate one or more variables or parameters in the logical form of the expression 'green'. These parameters need to be assigned a value in order for the speech-act content of sentences containing them, which corresponds to a Travisian understanding, to be determined. But now, if there potentially are as many and diverse understandings of, for instance, 'green' as Travis imagines for 'There is meat on the rug', this account starts to look implausible. Let us look at how the different understandings of the sentence 'There is meat on the rug' can be treated in accordance with Szabó and Sainsbury's accounts. Perhaps Szabó and Sainsbury would claim that the problematic word in 'There is meat on the rug' is 'meat'. Perhaps they would say that a comparison class needs to be determined, so that the logical form is 'meat (C)'. The hope would be that we in this way could give an analysis of why the sentence can be spoken truly of kidneys on the rug in some cases, but not in others. Still, this analysis of the logical form of 'meat' seems insufficient to account for the understanding had in the case where Mary's lamb is lying on the rug and that is understood as there being meat on the rug. If we identify the problem with this case as being that Mary's lamb is not yet meat, but that it is in virtue of that it is soon to be so that it can be true that there is meat on the rug, we could suggest that not only a comparison class needs to be determined in this case, but that also a soon-to-be parameter S needs to be determined. Perhaps we even need a time parameter for the expression 'soon' in the parameter S in order to know what to count as soon. In that case, we could suggest that the logical form of 'meat' is 'meat (C, S(t))'.

I would expect there to be objections to the suggestion that this is the right logical form of 'meat' in the case with Mary's lamb. We can observe that also the accounts I presented Szabó and Sainsbury as respectively giving of the logical form of 'green' in the case with the painted leaves differ.

However, I think disagreement about how to give an account of the logical form of various expressions only provides a reason to think that parameterised indexical accounts of Travis cases are implausible. But even if one thinks that there can be given a plausible account of this case as well as of others, there is a further reason for doubting the account. Granting some complex account of the logical form of ‘meat’ based on the issues that arise in the example with Mary’s lamb, it seems unlikely that the same account will apply in, for instance, the case where the sentence ‘There is meat on the rug’ is true because Sid is standing on the rug after having had meat for dinner. What aspects or factors in the context that are relevant to the different understandings of the sentence do not seem to be the same. Perhaps a suggestion would be to go for an account of the logical form of ‘meat’ that is so complex that it can encompass all cases. But however this account would be in detail, there will probably be variables that are claimed to be in need of specification for the speech-act content to be determined that do not need to be specified for simpler cases, such as in the case where it is true that there is meat on the rug because there are kidneys on the rug that are the meat for the Sunday brunch. For such simpler cases, the complex logical form then looks implausible. So even if a unified analysis can be given of all cases, I think such a complex account should be rejected for the reason that it seems unlikely that all of the postulated variables will need assignment of a value in all cases.²⁶

If one agrees that it is a problem for a complex account that not all variables apply in all cases where the expression is used, one might suggest that the logical form of the expression should be given as a disjunctive account, which combines all the possible logical forms for the different cases.

²⁶ It is worth noting that what I have called the argument from indefiniteness is also used by minimalists. As Borg writes: ‘one seems to be launched on a slippery slope: every element which is introduced will itself be open to further precisifications, and those precisifications to further precisifications, and so on, until we end up with specifying the meaning of each sentence as being somehow ‘maximally specific’ about the situations which satisfy it. Yet we have no reason to think that natural language sentences express such massively complex propositions’. (Borg 2004, pp. 241-242.) We see that Borg emphasises the implausibility of thinking that what we understand by a sentence is as complex as would be postulated by a complex account of the logical form. For Borg, however, this argument is presented a reason to doubt that something extra must be added to the content that a sentence has in order for the truth-conditions of an utterance of it to be determined.

However, there is a reason to doubt both of these alternatives. The reason is Travis's point that there can always be new uses of an expression, since there are indefinitely many understandings. With regard to the complex account, it would seem that even an account that encompasses all hitherto known cases may not work for a new use that the expression is put to. Here, one may be tempted to suggest that even if an account that works for all previous cases does not work for a new use, this does not mean that there *is* not a very complex logical form of the expression. It only means, one might suggest, that we have not fully uncovered it yet. However, on the assumption that there are indefinitely many uses of an expression, there can in principle be indefinitely many variables in the logical form of an expression. But a form with indefinitely many variables is not a very determinate form – indeed, I think it then becomes implausible to talk about a determinate form at all.

With regard to the suggestion that we may have a disjunctive account, one might not think that it would be a problem that the disjunction would be indefinitely long. However, Travis's point about the indefinite number of possible understandings means that, for any number of disjuncts we have on the disjunctive account, there can always be added another. This means that the disjunction in principle is infinite, and the idea of an infinite disjunction may be thought to be problematic as an account of logical form – at least, many semanticists seem to think so. In my opinion, the problem is again that the logical form in that case must be claimed to be indeterminate, and then it becomes implausible to talk about it as a form at all. In sum, the considerations made points to the conclusion that if the conclusion in Travis's argument from indefiniteness stands and there is no end to the possible understandings that a sentence can admit of, then approaches that seek to explain differences in speech-act content between utterances by postulating variables in the logical form of constituent expressions seem implausible.²⁷

²⁷ It can be mentioned that similar considerations will apply to accounts that seek to explain Travis cases in terms of ambiguity of ellipsis.

I think there is one way someone advocating a parameterised indexical account could get around the problem that Travis's argument from indefiniteness poses. One could suggest that in the logical form of 'meat' or 'green' or whichever adjectives one takes to be an indexical, there is just one parameter. We could perhaps call this a 'counts as' parameter, inspired by what MacFarlane (2007) suggests. In that case, it is not necessarily a problem that this parameter can be satisfied in indefinitely many ways. However, if a counts-as parameter is suggested as a way for the parameterised indexical approach to get around the argument from indefiniteness, the approach in effect turns out as a simple indexical approach like the one Rothschild and Segal advocate, since the 'counts as' parameter would not differentiate the semantics of one adjective from that of another. Rather, as MacFarlane notes, 'the counts-as parameter will be determined in complex ways by... features of the context' (ibid., p. 246), like the extensions of indexicals on Rothschild and Segal's proposal.

If we now turn to Rothschild and Segal's analysis, I think the argument from indefiniteness is not as fatal as it is for Szabó's and Sainsbury's analyses. Because Rothschild and Segal think that there is no specifiable rule or function that governs the use of indexical predicates, they avoid problems that Travis's argument from indefiniteness, as we have seen, raises for indexical accounts that do explain indexicality in terms of such rules or functions. What the conclusion in the argument from indefiniteness means for Rothschild and Segal's account is that there are indefinitely many tokens 'green_j', 'green_k', etc. that make up the indexical predicate type 'green', but they might not see this as problematic. In fact, they seem to think of the function that gives the semantics of the indexical predicate type 'green' as being a function from an indefinite range of arguments to an indefinite range of values, as it is a function from contexts to the extensions of particular tokens, both of which, if Travis's argument from indefiniteness is right, will count potentially indefinitely many for each expression. Perhaps it would be a problem for Rothschild and Segal's analysis that the understandings Travis comes up with need not only be of predicates, but can also be of sentences like 'There is meat on the rug', in which no expressions

function as predicates, but Rothschild and Segal are optimistic with regard to their account of predicates being extended to other kinds of expressions (Rothschild and Segal 2009, pp. 474-475).

3.3 Travis's rejection of a constraint on generality

The conclusion from the previous section is that the argument from indefiniteness gives good reasons to think that Szabó's and Sainsbury's analyses of the Travis case are wrongheaded, while the same does not follow for Rothschild and Segal's analysis. However, in virtue of all of these analyses holding that the difference in speech-act content between the utterances on the two occasions in the Travis case can be explained by a difference in the speech-act content of a constituent word – i.e. in virtue of them defending compositionality of speech-act content – there is an observation Travis makes that applies to them all. It is this observation I will present in this section. Before presenting the observation, it needs to be made clear which assumption it conflicts with, and why theses that assert the compositionality of speech-act content need to make this assumption. In order to do so it is helpful to look at an argument that Szabó (2010) gives as to why we should think that the speech-act content of 'green' differs between the two occasions.²⁸

In his argument, Szabó constructs an extension of a Travis case where someone who did not hear the speaker's utterance asks the speaker what was said, in reply to which the speaker utters 'It is green'. Imagine that this happens on both of the occasions of the Travis case. Szabó assumes, which is not in conflict with anything Travis holds, that because the speaker makes a restatement of the utterances, the speaker must be saying the same thing in 'The leaves are green' as in 'It is green' in each of the contexts. However, he further assumes that because the second utterance is a restatement, the speech-act content of the word 'green' must be the same in each of the

²⁸ This argument is part of an argument to the effect that Travis cases are not counterexamples to the thesis that speech-act content is compositional. Szabó's more overall aim in the paper is to argue that if it is granted that speech-act content is compositional, then there can, with this as a premise, be given an argument to the effect that expression content is compositional too.

utterances. Szabó's thought in drawing this conclusion seems to be the following. Since the word 'it' in 'It is green' refers to the same leaves as the leaves that are called green in the utterance of 'The leaves are green', it must be the case that 'green' has the same speech-act content in that utterance as in 'It is green', or else the two utterances could not have the same content.

Szabó proceeds with the argument by drawing upon similar reasoning. Acknowledging Travis's assumption (1) and (3), which are that the same leaves are spoken of and that the utterances of 'The leaves are green' have different truth-values, Szabó agrees to Travis's conclusion that the utterances of this sentence in the two respective contexts must be used to say distinguishable things. The same, he notes, must hold for the utterances of 'It is green'. After noting this, however, he continues '[b]ut whatever was said about the leaf in uttering 'it is green' was said in calling it 'green'' (ibid., p. 268). Again the thought seems to be that since there is a difference in the content of the utterances of 'It is green', and since the 'it' in both cases must refer to the leaves, the difference can only be due to a difference in the content that the word 'green' has on the occasions. From here, Szabó can conclude that the speech-act contents of 'green' differ between the occasions, which means that we even with regard to the Travis case can hold that the content of the utterances is composed from the content of the constituent speech-acts and the structure between them. So the Travis case is not a counterexample to compositionality.

We can see that the assumption that is implicit in the reason Szabó gives as to why 'green' must have the same speech-act content in the restatement as in the original utterance, and why it must have different speech-act contents between the two occasions is the following.

Assumption (I): Occurrences of an expression that are part of utterances made in the same context have speech-act contents that are identical.

This assumption is not only a necessary part of Szabó's argument, but also a necessary part of the view that speech-act content is compositional. It is necessary for the latter because, without the assumption, we cannot state the principle about compositionality of speech-act content. Regardless of the precise way in which the principle is stated, the statement of it will have to include that utterances that have the same speech-act content have constituents with the same speech-act content. This is just what Szabó claims to obtain when the restatement of the utterance 'It is green' is made. Furthermore – and following from the fact that it figures in a statement of the principle – the assumption is also needed in order for it to be possible to state a counterexample to the principle. A counterexample to the principle would require a case where the constituents of two utterances had the same speech-act content, but the utterances as a whole did not. It is the possibility of the Travis case being this kind of case that all of the analyses presuppose and deny, and thus also Sainsbury, and Rothschild and Segal must be making assumption (I), since they consider the Travis case to be a counterexample to the compositionality of speech-act content. In Szabó's argument it is denied that the constituent 'green' in the utterances of 'It is green' have the same speech-act content on the two occasions – a denial there would be no sense in making unless there could be cases where constituents do have the same speech-act content. But, as the assumption goes, there can be such cases; they are the cases where the constituent words are uttered in the same context.

Because the assumption that the speech-act contents of a word which is uttered several times in the same context are identical plays a part both in formulating and giving counterexamples to the principle, it is important to note that Travis's makes an observation that implies that the assumption is mistaken. In his discussion of a principle Evans calls 'The Generality Constraint' Travis formulates a version of this constraint as follows.

Now perhaps the idea of the generality constraint is this. Someone who grasps the thought that the words 'the thought that *a* is F' refer to, spoken on a given occasion, or where 'is F' makes some given contribution of the many it might, is thereby able to understand the

thought that would be referred to by ‘the thought that **b** is F’, spoken on that occasion, or where ‘is F’ makes the same contribution. This presupposes that, e.g., it is determinate what it is for ‘green’ to make the same contribution to the expression of a thought about a leaf as it does to a thought about mouldy cheese, or Uncle Hugo, and/or that surroundings which determine what would be expressed in calling a leaf green must, inevitably, determine what thought would be expressed in calling Uncle Hugo green, and that so it is with predicates in general. (Travis 1994, p. 173.)

Observe that the presupposition that Travis says underlies this version of the generality constraint amounts to much of the same as assumption (I). Because it is the thought that ‘the thought that a is F’ refers to that is in question, and not the sentence itself, the contribution that Travis talks of ‘is F’ as making to this thought must correspond to what I have been calling the speech-act content of that expression, and not to the expression content of it. Thus, when Travis writes that the generality constraint presupposes that it is determinate what it is for ‘is F’ or, as is his example, ‘green’ to make the same contribution to the expression of a thought, the presupposition he is talking of could also be formulated in terms of a constituent word having the same, i.e. identifiable or determinate, speech-act content in different utterances. Both on Travis’s presupposition and assumption (I) the same contribution will be made when the surroundings in which the thoughts are expressed remain the same – or, in alternative terms, when the context in which the utterances are made remains the same. Of course, there is a difference between the presupposition Travis formulates in the quote and assumption (I) in that Travis’s presupposition is open to that constituent expressions may make the same contribution to a thought for other reasons than them being uttered in the same context, while assumption (I) does not explicitly allow for this possibility. (However, there is nothing about the compositionality of speech-act content that prevents a proponent of it from being open to this possibility, so (I) could be formulated so as to allow for it.) Nevertheless, the likeness between the two is sufficient for the reasons in Travis’s rejection of the presupposition in this version of the generality constraint to apply also to assumption (I).

Travis's rejection of the generality constraint as understood above consists in an appeal to that it just is not plausible that there is a determinate contribution the word 'green' makes to an utterance of 'The leaves (on my tree) are green' and 'Uncle Hugo is green', even if these utterances should be made on the same occasion, in the same surroundings. Why is this not plausible? Travis's point is that we well may understand what it would be for the leaves on a certain tree to be green, what it would be for someone's bedroom walls to be green, and what it would be for a cheese that has been left in the refrigerator to be green, but still not understand what it would be for Uncle Hugo to be green (ibid., p. 168). It need not help at all to understand what it is for leaves to be green in order to understand what it is for Uncle Hugo to be the same, since for him to be so it not necessarily the same at all as what it is for a leaf. As Travis writes,

[a] capacity which consists in a suitable sensitivity to the surroundings of words is *both object- and surroundings-specific*. ... [O]ne may know, within given surroundings, a leaf to be counted as green or not, without grasping what it would be to 'go on in the same way', in those surroundings, in so classifying uncles.' (Ibid., p. 177, my emphasis.)

So when we on a certain occasion understand what would have to be the case in order for a certain thing to be green, our understanding is not of what would have to be the case in order for just anything to be green on that occasion. The thought seems to be that we do not have an independent grasp of how things would have to be in order to be green in certain surroundings, although we do grasp in a particular context what would have to be the case for a leaf to be green. But only if we had an independent grasp of this would we, as the generality constraint says, be able to grasp a thought expressed by applying the predicate to any object.

Proponents of the indexical analysis could respond to the observation Travis makes by claiming that the fact that we do not seem to grasp independently what it would be to be green, but always grasp this in accordance with what object is said to be green, can be explained by semantic analysis. Geach (1956) was early to observe the phenomenon that there are what he called

‘attributive’ adjectives which are such that in a phrase ‘an A B’, where ‘A’ is an adjective and ‘B’ is a noun, the predication does not logically split up into ‘is A’ and ‘is B’. In contemporary generative semantics, it is thought that adjectives for which this holds, which in this discourse are called ‘nonintersective adjectives’, can be accounted for semantically by the adjective combining with different nouns such that the speech-act content of it is influenced by which noun it is used to modify (see Heim and Kratzer, pp. 63-70). A typical example is the adjective ‘small’, where what it is to be a small animal is not the same as what it is to be a small elephant. However, the general idea seems to be that there is a parameter inside the adjective that needs to be satisfied by the noun that the adjective is used to modify in the context. This means that the explanation of nonintersective adjectives just is the parameterised indexical explanation we saw that Sainsbury and Szabó want to give of the case. In fact, in Szabó’s discussion, where the insight from Geach is sought explained, it seems that the comparison class that Szabó claims ‘green’ has in its logical form, where the comparison class is the *kind* of objects that the adjective ‘green’ is used about, does the same work as does specifying the noun that the adjective is used to modify on the mentioned semantic analysis. But if the suggestion is to explain the observation Travis makes in this way, then the account faces the same problem as we saw Sainsbury’s and Szabó’s accounts face with the argument from indefiniteness presented in the previous section. Another problem with the semantic analysis would be that it only takes into account the object-specificity that Travis mentions in the quotation, and not the surroundings-specificity (which may be why it on the mentioned semantic analysis is thought that nonintersective adjectives face additional problems because they are ‘vague and heavily context-dependent’ (ibid., p. 70)).

Irrespectively of the suggested semantic explanation, however, the decisive problem that Travis’s rejection of the generality constraint poses for all of the indexical analyses is that it means that assumption (I) must be rejected. However, the rejection of assumption (I) that follows from Travis’s considerations is not the assertion of the negation of (I). As we saw, Travis’s observation shows that it cannot be the case that we have an independent

grasp of how things would have to be in order to be, for instance, green on a given occasion. But in that case, it cannot be the case that there is a speech-act content of the constituent 'green' in an utterance of 'The leaves are green' that we can identify and compare to a speech-act content that the constituent has in an utterance of 'Uncle Hugo is green', or in a different utterance of 'The leaves are green' for that matter. To know how things would have to be in order to be green, I here assume, is to know what the speech-act content of 'green' is on the occasion. And this is just what Travis's observation shows that we cannot determine, even though we can determine what it is for a leaf to be green on the occasion. So his observation can also be put as being that, although we can determine the speech-act content of a sentence, we cannot necessarily determine a speech-act content of its constituents. Hence, I think we can conclude that the speech-act of a constituent expression in an utterance cannot be separated from the speech-act content of the utterance as a whole.

In asserting assumption (I), it is that such a separation can be made that needs to be presupposed, so it is in this way that the rejection of the generality principle is a rejection of (I). This means that neither assumption (I) nor its negation can be formulated without running into problems. (They can only be formulated by altering the content of it slightly, as Travis does when he formulates the presupposition implicit in the generality constraint as being that 'it is determinate what it is for 'green' to make the same contribution to the expression of a thought'). However, as I explained, assumption (I) is necessary for formulating a principle about the compositionality of speech-act content, as well as the negation of it. What is rejected is therefore that the way in which Travis cases can be counterexamples to the principle about compositionality of speech-act content can be thought of as a negation of the principle itself.²⁹ However, Szabó's, Sainsbury's and Rothschild and Segal's analyses presuppose that it can. This is manifest in that their analyses, as we saw in section one, must presuppose that the equivalent of Travis's assumption (2) concerns speech-

²⁹ We should note that the considerations do not necessarily have any bearing upon whether a principle about the compositionality of expression content can be formulated.

act content and not expression content. Their analyses argue that the expression content of a constituent can stay the same, but the speech-act content vary. They seek to explain Travis cases by locating the difference in speech-act content between the utterances in just one constituent of the utterances. But with Travis's rejection of the generality constraint it is clear that we cannot separate the speech-act content of a constituent of the utterance from the speech-act content of the utterance as a whole. Hence, the way in which the indexical analyses presuppose that the Travis case can be a counterexample to the compositionality of speech-act content cannot be presupposed.

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen that indexical analyses of the Travis case have in common that they reject assumption (2) of Travis's analysis, although only on a reading that Travis himself cannot be presupposing. The indexical analyses reject that there is no variation in the semantics of the words used, in the sense that speech-act contents of the constituent words 'green' are the same on both occasions. Szabó's and Sainsbury's accounts of how this happens were deemed wrongheaded on the basis of the argument from the indefiniteness of the number of possible understandings. It appeared that the logical form of 'green' would have to contain indefinitely many parameters, and both a complex account and a disjunctive account of the logical form faced the problem that there could be no determinate logical form if there are indefinitely many parameters. Rothschild and Segal's account of how the speech-act content of 'green' varies between occasions, on the other hand, would not necessarily be problematic due to the argument from indefiniteness. However, because they, like Szabó and Sainsbury, read assumption (2) in a way that presupposes that speech-act contents of constituents of utterances can be compared and judged to be identical or different, Travis's observation that it is not determinate what it is for a constituent 'green' to make the same contribution to an understanding of a sentence in which it occurs has a fatal consequence for all of the analyses. For with this observation, it becomes clear that a speech-act content of a

constituent of an utterance cannot be separated from the speech-act content of the utterance as a whole. We saw that a possible comeback for proponents of indexical analyses was to try to explain the interconnectedness of the speech-act contents of constituents semantically, but that this attempt would face the same problem as Szabó's account does with the argument form indefiniteness. Hence, the way of thinking about the Travis case that the indexical analyses presuppose must be rejected, and with this follows a rejection of the analyses themselves.

Overall Conclusion

The general aim of this thesis has been to present and explain Travis's version of contextualism, and to defend it against two alternative views on context-sensitivity, namely semantic minimalism and indexicalism. The way in which I have sought to do this is by arguing that the analyses proponents of these views give of a Travis case are not viable alternatives to Travis's own analysis of it. Of course, there may be objections that minimalists and indexicalists have to Travis's view independently of what is right to think about Travis cases. In addition, there is one important general view of context-sensitivity that I have not discussed as a possible analysis of Travis cases; this is the view I, following Recanati (2007), called 'circumstance-relativity'. Thus, there are several objections to Travis's view I have not given any defence against. What follows if my arguments are accepted, therefore, is only a partial defence of Travis's position. But in so far as Travis's analysis is accepted, the conclusion he draws from it must be too, which would mean that it is agreed that the same semantics is compatible with several distinct truth-conditions, or admits of several understandings. This is a corner stone of Travis's version of the radical view.

However, alongside the aim of defending Travis's analysis from other alternatives, my hope was also that doing so could increase insight into his position. What I will try to do by way of conclusion and summary, therefore, is to note how the aspect I emphasised of Travis's view in chapter one, which concerned that the understanding of an expression is derived from a sensitivity to things being as they are, can be seen as a foundation for, and, as such, also an explanation of, the conclusions from the arguments in chapter two and three. Although I think the conclusions argued for can stand on their own feet and are not in need of further justification, I think that seeing how they connect to Travis's view may enhance our understanding of it, as well as assure us that the conclusions are not problematic on Travis's view.

Let us first look at how the point about the derivation of understandings relates to the argument in chapter two. The argument in chapter two was focused around rejecting the principle that I called the sufficiency principle. The idea was that there are several ways in which an utterance can be made true, and that it is sufficient that it is made true in one of these ways, even though that might not be the way that we would assume that the utterance would have to be made true. However, if it is thought that we arrive upon understandings of words in the way that I presented Travis as thinking, this way of thinking about truth-making cannot be accepted. For the understandings of words are always derived from a sensitivity to the *particular* state of the world that the words are used to speak of. The understanding we have of words as they are used on an occasion is therefore not of what it is to, say, be green as such. Rather, the understanding of a given use of the words ‘The leaves are green’ is an understanding of what it is for the particular leaves in question to be in the particular state that they are spoken of as being in on the occasion. A general condition for what it is to be green as such is therefore entirely beside the point to what the sentence ‘The leaves are green’ is used to speak of and thereby say, and to whether it is used to say something true or false. But it is such a general condition that it must be presupposed to be involved in the understanding of the words if it is to be sufficient for the truth of the utterance that it is made true in a way that it in general can be made true that things are green. Thus, if it is recognised that the words ‘The leaves are green’ when used on a given occasion are not used to speak of what it is for leaves to be green in general, but what it is for the particular leaves to be in the state that they are, the sufficiency principle must be recognised as false as well.

Travis’s view that understandings of words are derived from a sensitivity to that which they are used to speak of can also be seen as a foundation for the conclusion of the argument from indefiniteness in chapter three. With respect to the argument from indefiniteness, the important point is that Travis thinks that it is things being as they are, or the state of things which the words are used to speak of, that facilitates the understanding of the words. For if this is so, we can see why it makes sense that the space of

possible understandings is indefinitely large. It is indefinitely large, because that which the understanding is derived from, i.e. the states of the world, are indefinitely many. The number of states of the world, or the number of things being as they are, are indefinitely many because the world can continue for indefinitely long, so given a way things were before, there can be a new state of the world, and, as we saw that Travis thinks in chapter one, we can ‘use old descriptions ... to new ends’ (Travis 2008a, p. 136), by using the same sentence such that it bears an understanding which has certain truth-conditions. If one objects against the conclusion drawn in the argument from indefiniteness that we can run out of imagination – impressive, though, as Travis’s imagination in coming up with different cases is – and that there might be an end to the possible understandings words can admit of, this foundation of the point can be brought to mind. The idea that there are indefinitely many possible understandings does not rely on how imaginative we are, but on how many ‘things being as they are’ there can be.

Also the second argument from chapter two has a foundation in the view that all understandings are derived from things being as they are. The conclusion from the rejection of the generality constraint is that we cannot separate the speech-act content of a constituent word from the speech-act content of the utterance as a whole. With Travis’s view in mind we can see why this must be so. As I discussed in chapter one, the fact that Travis seems to think understandings are arrived upon in this way suggests that we need to know what the words are used to speak of, or, as I called it, what the reference of the speaking is, before we have an understanding of the words on the occasion. We also saw that the reference of the speaking could not be understood as a conjunction of the referents of the referring terms, but must rather be a certain part of the world, so that the speaking refers to that part as a whole. This means that the understanding of a sentence as it is used on an occasion proceeds from the *whole* that the sentence is used to refer to. In this regard, it makes sense that the understanding the words bear is an understanding of what the words *together* are used to refer to, and that it

cannot necessarily be done to separate the understanding of one word from the understanding of the other.

In these three ways, Travis's view can serve as an explanation of the conclusions with regard to the sufficiency principle, the argument from indefiniteness, and the observation in response to the generality constraint. However, I do not think that the only virtue of Travis's view is that it can serve thus. The most striking advantage of Travis's view, as I see it, is that it provides a unified explanation of the context-sensitivity of sentences that, on other views, needs to be accounted for by different mechanisms, so that it may seem as if they are instances of different phenomena. Because we have mainly been focusing on one single example throughout, the context-sensitivity of predicates, since all of accounts we have looked at locate the problem with the sentence 'The leaves are green' in the word 'green'. Also, the views that have been in focus – minimalism and indexicalism – account for context-sensitivity in a uniform way, namely as indexicals. But there are many sentences that can be used so that it seems as if features of the context needs to be drawn upon in order to determine whether they are used to say something true or false, and for which it may seem difficult or strange to give an explanation by postulating words functioning as indexicals. One can, of course, deny that context-sensitivity comes into question with these sentences, but if one does not, as on versions of the moderate view, it is often thought that for different expressions or classes of expressions different explanations of context-dependence must be given, so that one gives a different kind of explanation of the context-dependence of, say, quantifiers than the kind of explanation one would give of the context-dependence of the possessive morpheme '-s' or 'knows that'.

Travis's account has the advantage that the same explanation can be given for all of these cases, as well as for new cases that may come up. The explanation is that the understanding we have of words as used on an occasion depends on what the occasion is and what the words are used to speak of. The same explanation can be given, I think, for figurative speech, and hence there is no need to distinguish between literal and figurative

speech on Travis's account, which is an advantage since this distinction can often create problems. The reason as to why the same explanation can be given for all of these cases is that, on Travis's account, it is not expressions or classes of expressions as such that are thought to be context-sensitive, but the *use* of them as they are put together in sentences on various occasions. This feature of the account came clear with the rejection of the generality constraint, as we saw that we must be acquiring an understanding of the words as they are used *together* rather than that an understanding of individual words can be grasped independently. Because it is the use of words that gives rise to the phenomenon of context-sensitivity on Travis's account, it is possible to say that all words are context-sensitive on his view. But we should be careful to point out that this does not mean that all words require completion from context, or that all words are like simple indexicals, since it is not the individual words as such, but their use in sentences on occasions, that is responsible for the phenomenon of context-sensitivity.

As an end to this conclusion, I would like to note a few points that I either think Travis would not agree to or that I am not certain of whether he would agree to. However, these are points that I think are ways to extend Travis's view, but I will not substantiate this in detail here. Firstly, it seems to me that if understandings of words are derived from that which the words are used to speak of, or the reference of the speaking, then what we do when we communicate is that we refer to different bits of the world, where the bits of the world that we refer to are individuated as bits by the fact that we use certain words to refer to them. This may seem too restrictive, especially if the reference of a speaking must be a concrete or material part of the world. But as I see it, there is no reason as to why only material parts of the world can be referred to. For instance, a part of the world can be words. As Austin writes about that which words are used to communicate about: '[t]here is no reason why the world should not include the words, in every sense except the sense of the actual statement itself which on any particular occasion is being made about the world' (Austin 1979, p. 121). In fact, I think we could include whatever words are used to speak of as the referents of speakings, where this can be any of such kinds of things as thoughts, ideas, problems,

institutions, fictional characters, numbers, qualities, and much more – and complexes of these.

A further aspect of the view that communication functions by speakers referring to different bits of the world, is, I think, that when we say that someone said the same as someone else, what we compare are not the speakings, but what the speakings refer to. This would mean that restating or reporting is not a matter of speakings having the same truth-conditions, but a matter of referring to the same state of things in the world. And if it is taken on board that what we compare in speech reports are the referents of speakings, then there seems to me to be no reason or need to say that understandings of words are the same or different. So the question of whether we can have the same understanding from speakings that use different words – although it is a question one might be tempted to answer by comparing the truth-conditions of the speakings – would not be something that needs to be answered. Instead, we could treat all understandings as unique. As I said, the views mentioned in these two last paragraphs are not views I will substantiate here, but I hope to be able to do so elsewhere.

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