

Discussion note

Précis by Capone in response to Zhang and Zhang[☆]

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Abstract

In this paper I respond to some provocative remarks by [Zhang and Zhang \(2017\)](#) and I argue that their claim that there is no compatibility between Default semantics and Relevance theory is exaggerated. In [Capone \(2011a,b\)](#), I provided a synthetic approach which did not presuppose that we necessarily slavishly adhere to all details of Jaszczolt's or Relevance Theory. In that paper, I tried to make sense of the idea of modularity of mind. However, those ideas could also be integrated into a theory of neural networks. In this paper, I point out, however briefly, that it makes sense to connect the generalizations offered by Default Semantics with the role played by Broca's area in cognition (here I follow [Pennisi and Falzone \(2016\)](#) ideas) (see also [Capone, 2017](#)).

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I am grateful to [Zhang and Zhang \(2017\)](#) for drawing attention to a paper of mine written some time ago ([Capone, 2011a](#)), in which I reflected on considerations voiced by the theory of Default Semantics (notably expressed by [Jaszczolt, 1999, 2016](#), and updated in 2016) and Relevance Theory, in the hope to derive some constructive, synthetic and possibly useful considerations. Normally, through others we learn something new and we should listen carefully to what they say, although here I got the impression that the reply to my paper was not written in a constructive spirit and, at most, afforded me a chance to clarify matters that were left less explicit. Nevertheless, this is an opportunity to reflect further on the semantics/pragmatics debate and also to give some thought to the kind of issues which I raised (albeit rather briefly and sketchily) in [Capone \(2017\)](#) about modularization. This is perhaps one of the most important topics in pragmatics and theory of mind, and one which I broached in [Capone \(2011b\)](#). This is perhaps one of the topics for future investigation and it is not by chance that this topic came up when I read books by Jaszczolt and now it is coming up again in a reply to a paper of mine which was (largely) about Jaszczolt's Default Semantics.

In [Capone \(2011a\)](#), I tried to reflect (rather synthetically, I should say) on possible connections between inferential strategies, as developed within a theory of communication called 'Relevance Theory' and a theory of semantic defaults (basically intended as standardized inferences in the sense of [Bach, 1998](#)). Although [Capone \(2011a\)](#) is a rather complex article aiming to extend [Jaszczolt's \(1999, 2005\)](#) theory by incorporating, discussing and adapting important intuitions found in [Dascal \(2003\)](#) (see also [Zielinska, 2016](#)), by keeping the discussion short one may say that the aim of that paper can be captured in the excerpt below:

We wonder if the cognitive defaults are reducible to more general principles. Now, this question is clearly a question about the link between Default Semantics and Relevance Theory. While a cognitive default may work as an

[☆] I would like to give thanks to Kasia Jaszczolt for many useful and most insightful discussions during the First International Conference in Pragmatics and Philosophy (Palermo May 2016). Many thanks to Nino Bucca, Ninni Pennisi, and Alessandra Falzone for their stimulating discussions. This paper is a reply and, therefore, it suffers from many of the defects of the paper it replies to. I assume it would have been more constructive, instead, to engage in a discussion of modularity vs. modularization. I assume the importance of Default Semantics is to have pointed towards the crucial role of modularization in building up a theory of mind-reading. Another interesting point could have been a discussion of the innateness of pragmatic principles. Could they just be a priori principles without being innate? Could modularization be an alternative to innateness? Part of this discussion can be found in [Capone \(2016\)](#), while part of the discussion is still open (to debate) and probably deserves being addressed in a separate paper.

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instruction to interpret a certain fragment of language use in a certain way, it is possible that behind it there is a cognitive principle of basic rationality. This I will not deny, albeit I will insist that cognitive defaults are short-circuited inferences, in which the mind is not busy calculating inferences on the basis of general principles of rationality. We can, however, note important connections. Each of such defaults may arise due to the need of avoiding ambiguities and obscurities which would impede not only language processing, but also language acquisition. Since the mind works by promoting contextual effects while keeping efforts as low as possible, and since without such cognitive defaults language acquisition would be impeded or retarded, the mind recruits Sperber and Wilson's Principle of Relevance for the purpose of creating cognitive defaults which, if implemented as simple instructions, are even more frugal and faster than the application of the Principle of Relevance each time a certain input occurs. We may see the cognitive defaults as specializations of the application of the Principle of Relevance. (Capone, 2011a:1746).

The details of that paper, especially the data taken from Dascal (2003) which I would have thought would have deserved notice, have escaped the attention of Zhang and Zhang (2017), who, by writing a reply to that paper, concentrated on some objections. This is a noticeable omission and one I would like to point out in the hope that readers may focus on those data and my analysis of them, which need not be totally insignificant. In this paper, however, I propose to address the details of Zhang and Zhang's (2017) objections (as, after all their paper is nothing but a battery of objections with no significant positive part).

As Zhang and Zhang say, Relevance theory and Default Semantics appear to be antithetical frameworks and possibly "rival theories". The adjective 'rival' used by Zhang and Zhang – in addition to the provocative intentions underlying its usage – seems too strong and even misguided, perhaps, to me; for one thing, no theories (about certain common phenomena) can be rival, if they aim at the truth, and the truth can be established (at least in theory, but, generally, also in practice) through a positive dialectics. Certainly, they can be different – and, not surprisingly, Zhang and Zhang are correct about this, but this was a fact which I did not obtusely ignore or wanted to ignore. Nor should Zhang and Zhang be credited for saying what is obvious (or what should be obvious). It is possible that there is a sense of rivalry by relevance theorists with respect to Jaszczolt's ideas, possibly because she represents, on some accounts at least, the future (and not the past), and because there is a meta-theoretical quality to her research which, if not in detail, offers to guide us along the right paths in the attempt to construct the pragmatic theory of the future. I should not reiterate, here, considerations I expressed in my very positive review of Jaszczolt (2016) in Capone (2016), except for the more limited purpose of specifying that I believe that the great merit of Jaszczolt's views is to have meditated on the abstract formats which pragmatic theories should take. In this sense, Jaszczolt's views represent modernity. (It is not surprising that part of theorizing should be devoted to theories about theories and should address general (rather than specific) theoretical problems).

A remark by Zhang and Zhang that seems to me to be at least problematic is that, in order to escape Grice's circle (a theoretical problem arising in the apparent circularity due to the fact that implicatures take input from what is said and what is said takes input from pragmatics (see Capone, 2003, 2006, 2009 on Grice's circle and uncancellable explicatures)), "Relevance Theory places no theoretical weight on the distinction between generalized conversational implicatures and particularized conversational implicatures". The move of not making such a distinction is completely without effects with respect to the resolution of Grice's circle. In fact, as I made clear in my proposal in Capone (2003)¹ and (2006) on the topic (see Haugh, 2013 for a reply), the circle arises both through generalized and particularized explicatures (the discussion in those papers, in fact, focused on particularized explicatures). In any case, Zhang and Zhang seem to admit that Relevance theorists accept that there are things like generalized implicatures and that both types of inference are involved in explicatures. Still, it is a mystery to me how it comes that such an admission should be able to resolve Grice's circle, given that Levinson (2000) acknowledges this circularity problem and it is clear that Levinson also accepts that there are generalized and particularized implicatures (though his emphasis on generalized implicatures is heavier).² One précis

¹ I did not stress enough the importance of Capone (2003) which is the first paper published in an international journal to say that explicatures are not cancellable, even prior to Burton-Roberts' (2005) review of Carston's book.

² I am trying to figure out why my opponents think that Grice's circle is resolved (or does not arise) by eliminating the distinction between generalized and particularized implicatures (or explicatures). It is interesting that they do not bother to offer an explanation of their conviction that the circle disappears if we eliminate this terminological distinction. Perhaps they think that particularized implicatures should take input from generalized implicatures and it is this that creates the circle. But even assuming that there are only particularized implicatures, one may well be committed to the view that certain particularized implicatures take input from certain other particularized implicatures (as this is guaranteed by the fact that, however we segment or circumscribe the context, there is always a larger context that could potentially be taken into account, which would require certain particularized implicatures to take input from other particularized implicatures). (The alternative is that there are only generalized implicatures, but this is really contrary to the spirit of Relevance Theory, as my opponents seem to accept at some point which I then specifically discuss in this paper; if anything, a theory of only particularized implicatures perhaps is feasible but I do not see how a theory of merely generalized implicatures should be feasible (of course contextual sensitivity can be built into the theory by resorting to the notion of cancellability but this might be a serious theoretical problem when one notices that at least in practice many implicatures and certainly explicatures, in general, are not cancellable).)

should be made at this point: even if Relevance Theorists admitted (in theory) that there is a class of generalized implicatures, they normally prefer to go for contextual explanations of inferences. They prefer to examine utterances in context and account for nonce inferences. Of course, this is not to say that one cannot in principle use the Principle of Relevance and calculate generalized implicatures (or explicatures) on that basis (in fact, this is what I have done for many years); but it is a fact that Relevance Theorists do not do that. In fact, there are authors like Jay Atlas who claim (personal communication) that Relevance Theory heavily utilized his notions about informativeness expressed in a seminal paper by Atlas and Levinson (1981). Perhaps this is a fact that is not well known and which ought to be stressed sufficiently, because otherwise it appears that the theories by Atlas and Levinson or those by the Relevance Theorists are totally disconnected. Acknowledging this fact clearly throws a negative light on the remarks by Zhang and Zhang who completely endorse a picture of the two (or three) theories as radically antithetical (and one would do well to note that all such theories are related by some core pragmatic points). One could (in a sense) say that Relevance Theory started with Atlas and Levinson's idea that the interpretation that mostly wins is the richer, more informative one – the one which, in later terminology by Relevance Theorists, has greater cognitive effects. (The reason for this, in case you wonder why, is that the more informative interpretation (the one eliminating a greater amount of states of the world) is the one that is most useful (for the purpose of deliberation, or practical reasoning)). What are greater cognitive effects if not elements having greater informative value? This is a point which Zhang and Zhang clearly were not able to appreciate enough.

Zhang and Zhang at one point accuse me of saying something false:

Capone (2011:1744) claims that “Relevance Theorists are mainly concerned with the class of phenomena Grice dubbed ‘particularized implicatures’”. However, Relevance Theory, contrary to what Capone proposes, is mainly concerned with explicatures (in contrast to implicatures). (Zhang and Zhang, pp. 2–3).

Zhang and Zhang here concentrate on an equivocation, which they create on purpose. I agree with Zhang and Zhang that Relevance Theorists define implicatures in a way that is different from explicatures (and from the Gricean or Levinsonian notion of conversational implicature) – but who says that we should slavishly follow what they say? The relationship between implicatures and explicatures is a complex one. The pragmatic resources used for implicatures are the same as those used for explicatures – the Gricean Principles or the Principle of Relevance. If there is a theory in which implicatures are to be kept distinct from explicatures, that is Capone (2009) where I explicitly say that explicatures are not cancellable (contrary to what Relevance Theorists say). As far as I know, Relevance Theorists say that (conversational) implicatures, unlike explicatures, derive from deductive mechanisms – but this looks like an exiguous motivation for a distinction, not to mention that in my papers on Grice's circle (Capone, 2003, 2009) I amply proved this to be false. Take for example an explicature like ‘If some students come, then I will not be able to give the assignment to everyone’. Is not the explicature related to the generalized conversational implicature some → Not all? In any case, what I was suggesting, at that point of my paper is that while neo-Griceans prefer explanations in terms of generalized implicatures, Relevance Theorists prefer to account for interpretations in terms of contextual explanations (the case of ‘some’ seems to me to be emblematic, as Carston (1998) wrote a paper on this; so this is the reason why I chose this example). Zhang and Zhang's remarks simply lead us to reflect further on the relationship between implicatures and explicatures (Levinson wisely avoids the term ‘explicature’ because he notes that there are at least some reasons for conflating the two terms). Unlike the other disputants, I like the term ‘explicature’, which I should say I use more parsimoniously than the other theorists (confining myself to cases where the explicature is posited to resolve a case of potential contradiction or (necessary) falsehood), because I have claimed – correctly from my point of view – that explicatures are NOT cancellable. Now I admit that my use of the term ‘explicature’ is more limited than the one by other theorists and this may well be the reason why we arrived at opposite conclusions. (I found the term ‘explicature’ useful for cases in which, without positing such theoretical entities, the proposition expressed would appear to be false (or neither true nor false), contradictory or logically absurd and the purpose of the explicature is to liberate the statement from this logical deficiency (which is the reason why cancelling the explicature amounts to returning to a logical deficiency)).

Zhang and Zhang on p. 3 say that Relevance Theorists and Jaszczolt say different things about explicatures. For Carston (2002), for example, explicatures are developments of logical forms, while for Jaszczolt the logical form need not be the point of departure of the interpretation work. In (extreme) cases of irony, the logical form may be cast aside in favour of other salient interpretations (which may be the opposite of what is said in the logical form). Hence Zhang and Zhang take the two theories to be incompatible. Now, it is not clear to me what notion of incompatibility Zhang and Zhang bear in mind. If we had two different plugs which need to go into the same socket and one is bigger than the other, then surely one is incompatible with the other. However, if I am an expert electrician and find a way to use both plugs (say, an adaptor) then one could surely no longer be able to say that they are incompatible. I quite agree with Jaszczolt that merger representations need not always take as input logical forms (e.g. in cases of irony). Take the case of silence, for which a theory of interpretation has been developed by Kurzon (1995) in a very instructive and interesting paper. Here no logical forms are available as input to merger representations (à la Jaszczolt), hence it is false to assert (in this case) that explicatures are developments of logical forms. It can also be false in another case, when the explicatures are not

developments but avail themselves of subtractive processes (e.g. Sicily is a triangle) (see [Capone, 2013](#)). Surely you would not say that Sicily is a triangle, and thus you do not develop this logical form literally. So what? With appropriate modifications, both theories appear to me to work. We should distinguish between naive compatibility and sophisticated compatibility. But then why should we really want to support the view that the two theories are compatible? At one point we may state that despite the differences, they produce sufficiently good results and we also know how to modify them to make them good. Is not this enough? The authors are unnecessarily catastrophic on this point.

On the question of compatibility, I should mention that an anonymous referee makes a rather interesting point. While Relevance Theory and Default Semantics are both contextualist approaches to meaning, one seems to be more radically contextualist than the other, given that, according to Jaszczolt, conceding that the point of departure of pragmatics should be the logical form is simply misguided. Sometimes the logical form has no real psychological centrality in processing and it is not the starting point for calculation of inferences (take for example ironies, where the logical form is not incrementally added to merger representation). I quite agree with the referee that this is not a negligible difference, but I am not as catastrophic as s/he is because I think that this is a problem that should be settled one way or the other and, thus, progress can be made in a dialectical way. I am favourable to conceding that Jaszczolt's view, in this respect, seems closer to a psychologically plausible theory of pragmatic interpretation, but this is not to say that Relevance Theory's concern with linguistic semantics is misguided. That view should be amended and ameliorated somehow.

Another point the referee makes is that s/he does not see the point of explaining the defaults posited by Default semantics by using mechanisms of Relevance Theory, when, instead, they are explained by the notion of intentionality (the fact that utterances aim at representing reality). I do not think that the notion of intentionality has no role to play, but, to make an example, when you decide whether an utterance has an attributive or referential interpretation, you cannot just say that the referential interpretation is preferred just because of the intentionality that is inherent in such utterances, but you have to explain why the referential interpretation is more informative. The fact that an utterance can be interpretatively ambiguous between a referential and an attributive interpretation clearly shows that intentionality cannot just be presumed, but must be explained. To claim that utterances typically aim at referring to reality is a very strong claim – while there is some plausibility in such a view, one should also admit that many utterances are produced to represent a mental panorama or to make generalizations. It is, in my view, much better to show with detailed arguments why the referential interpretations are chosen as default (see [Capone, 2011b](#)).

On p. 4, Zhang and Zhang criticize me because I offer an interpretation of default semantics as a semantic theory – the authors, instead say that it is a pragmatically informed theory. To corroborate this view they make reference to socio-cultural defaults. Consider the following utterance by an Italian teacher in a modern school (an example actually used in [Capone \(2005\)](#)):

(1) Rossi, vieni!

When I was a child, this meant 'Rossi come to my desk and get yourself ready to be examined'. Nowadays it means 'Rossi I want to examine you, get ready, but you can stay at your desk, if you like' (how many things can change in 35 years!).

Is the interpretation of this utterance semantic or pragmatic? I would say that it is of both kinds. Here 'semantic' does not exclude 'pragmatic' (we have to know what context we are in to make sense of this utterance; semantics here seems to involve some kind of discourse-related rule). There is probably something missing in Jaszczolt's discussion of default semantics, as she is ambivalent on cancellability of explicatures. She concurs with me ([Capone, 2009](#)) that they are hard to cancel ([Jaszczolt, 2016](#)), but she never goes as far as saying that they are not cancellable (instead, she uses the weaker but useful term 'entrenched').³ Zhang and Zhang do not appear to do much to address the potential implications of this debate and now I take a chance to open up this debate again. To say that explicatures can be entrenched is not as strong, as a claim, as saying that they are not cancellable. Lack of cancellability, in my theory, was a theoretical necessity and not just a matter of usage (as the term 'entrenched' seems to suggest, if I understand Jaszczolt well) – lack of cancellability is a logical necessity flowing from the (pragmatic) purpose of explicatures.

On p. 4, Zhang and Zhang, contrary to what they have said previously, now say that the two theories by Jaszczolt and Relevance theorists are indeed compatible. One point which the authors seem to use to prove compatibility is that both sets of authors have abandoned the divide between particularized and generalized implicatures (or explicatures). Zhang and Zhang now say that Relevance Theorists have rejected the category of generalized implicatures (however, at a prior point in the paper they say that Carston admits there is a category of generalized implicatures, a contradiction which should have been avoided at a careful reading of that paper). Zhang and Zhang now say that even if Default Semantics and Relevance Theory are (objectively) compatible, this does not mean that a unified theory can be built out of them. I quite agree that one should not try to unify those theories but take what is good from each of them.

³ A referee objects that the discussion of this point can be found in [Jaszczolt \(2009a,b\)](#). At this point I should stress that the cancellability problem and my claim concerning non-cancellability of explicatures date back to [Capone \(2003, 2006\)](#).

Other criticisms I have to face are the following. Jaszczolt's default inferences are different from Levinson's generalized implicatures. First, they are not local and, second, they contain an element of reasoning. Furthermore, the validity of scalar generalized implicatures have been challenged by experimental pragmatists because processing them in context takes more time than processing words in isolation.⁴ Hence, the (presumed) incompatibility between Levinson's theory, Jaszczolt's theory and Relevance theory (so at three different points Zhang and Zhang say that the theories are incompatible, then compatible and then incompatible). This is clearly a point where one cannot really say that the theories are the same. If we accept that the semantics (and here I purely mean 'semantics') of words can be contextualized in the sentences and longer contexts in which they are situated, I have no qualms against accepting that associated pragmatic generalized inferences too can be contextualized and such contextualizations (if they take place) take time. There is no surprise that, in context, the processing time for scalar items is longer than it would be for isolated utterances of scalar items – this I take as neither falsifying nor threatening the theory of scalar implicatures. Since scholars like Levinson admit that these inferences are cancellable, then they must concede that these items are in need of contextual processing. The only objection I can anticipate is that since contextual processing is needed anyway, why should we not dispense with conceptualization of scalar implicatures? Why do we need to generalize from contextual processings and construct archives possibly as a result of modularization? (see [Karmiloff-Smith, 1992](#)). The only satisfactory answer that comes to mind is that there are areas responsible for generalizations, like Broca's area, and these provide generalizations whether needed or not. It is impossible for the brain not to make generalizations and not to construct archives where to place them (as a result of modularization).⁵

One of the most crucial charges against my views, as expressed in *Default Semantics and the Architecture of the mind*, is that I interpret 'default inferences' in one way, while Jaszczolt interprets them in a different way. If I understand Zhang and Zhang well, the default inferences Jaszczolt has in mind comprise conscious and effortful pragmatic processes. Furthermore, according to Zhang and Zhang, Jaszczolt takes shortcuts to involve no effortful inferences. The authors almost make it appear that I believe that inferences are not conscious and are not effortful, simply because I allow for the possibility of associative shortcuts. Hence the alleged incompatibility between Jaszczolt's and my views. I take this line of argument to be rather strange, because throughout my career I have supported the idea – which at least started with Grice (and all the Greek and Medieval philosophers who preceded him) that inferences of the pragmatic kind are intentional and if they are intentional it follows that they must be conscious (at least in the sense of being available to the mind, should the speaker or hearer reflect on them). 'Conscious' does not mean here that these processes are necessarily reflective – that is the result of reflection. They must be available to consciousness, should one reflect on them or have a chance to discuss them (as we do in a scientific paper). Normally a speaker knows what she means! Are they also effortful? In a sense they are. Whenever I think or speak, I make an effort. Whenever I memorize a generalization, I make an effort. Of course 'effort' is a comparative notion. Some process may be more effortful than others. Reflective inferences are usually more effortful than unreflective ones (and the fact that they may go wrong more easily is a proof that the mind is more directly involved in coming up with an idiosyncratic response to an interpretative problem (see [Soames, 2015](#))). Associative inferences – like the ones we make when we have access to a referential rather than an attributive interpretation for a definite description (e.g. Smith's murderer) are presumably less effortful than reflective inferences or than unreflective inferences of a different type (I have had dinner → I have had dinner at the usual time for dinner). But now, for a second, let us assume that it is not easy to calculate or assess relative cognitive effort. Let us assume that the mind works in this way:

make generalizations and use them, whenever it is possible.

Then associative inferences (those due to what [Bach, 1998](#) calls 'standardization') would be made and used wherever possible, preferring them to other types of inference, regardless of whether they are more effortful or not. This in practice means that, if I have learned by heart that $44 \times 55 = 2420$, there would be no reason to use a calculator to arrive at the

⁴ Actually in [Capone \(2011a,b\)](#) I made abundantly clear that standard scalar inferences need to be adjusted to context and that these adjustments take some (processing) time. I actually wrote: "In particular, I analyze the phenomenon [Bach \(1998\)](#) calls 'standardization' and propose that once inferences become standardized, they are no longer processed through the Principle of Relevance, given that they can be furnished directly by the default inferences archive. I consider potential objections to this idea, based on experimental pragmatics and arrive at the conclusion that merger representations, which guarantee compositionality at the level of the utterance, take into account both Default Semantics and modulated effects due to context. Following [Horn \(2005\)](#), I assume that contextual information may seep into the pragmatic interpretation while the default semantics is considered" (p. 1741).

⁵ Nowadays scholars think that Broca's area is most important for generalizations and, in particular, linguistic generalizations ([Pennisi and Falzone, 2016](#)). I accept the following considerations, mainly due to [Pennisi and Falzone \(2016\)](#). Broca's area is to be considered the neural centre of language production. It is involved in building up encyclopaedic knowledge. It plays the role of integrating different linguistic and extra-linguistic components of language within the network, which would deal with keeping up on-line information as is elaborated and make a unification of the various elements of language.

same knowledge. The association is available and I use it. Why should I not use it? My considerations so far are based on a presupposition, that the mind works in this way:

it is impossible for it not to make generalizations, when it can make them.

The only way I can see that my argument can collapse is to show (if this is ever feasible) that the mind has no obligation to make generalizations, when it can make them. Presumably Broca's area is busy making generalizations and there is no evidence that the mind works in the opposite way, by a principle of laziness. In other words, all I am arguing for is this: if the mind has made a generalization, it will use it. Making generalizations or using them, of course, is an effortful process, although it may be less effortful than other types of inference (e.g. deliberative or reflective inference).

On p. 6, contradicting everything said by themselves above, Zhang and Zhang make the following claim:

Contrary to what Capone argues, Default Semantics does not belong to inferential pragmatics: default meanings in this approach are non-inferential in nature. In post-Gricean pragmatics, there are two opposing views on whether or not pragmatic determination of truth-conditional content involves inferences. Relevance theorists take the inferentialism stance and argue that linguistic communication should involve inferences, so the recovery of explicatures involves inferences. But Jaszczolt (2005) holds the anti-inferentialism position, that is that default meanings are generated without involving inferences.

I now remind my readers that the authors, to start with, argued that default semantics is a kind of semantics and they said it also involves pragmatics. Now they say the opposite and say that default semantics does not deal with inferential pragmatics. At this point, I want to avail of my various conversations with Jaszczolt in which she made clear to me that Default Semantics is a theory about theories and, in particular, it is essentially a meta-theoretical view about the ways in which semantic, pragmatic, socio-cultural pieces of information should be combined together. Now, if these ideas are correct (and if Jaszczolt still sticks to them) it goes without saying that pragmatic information must be part of the picture, as well as reflective or unreflective inference. My original idea is that default inferences happen by default and are of an associative type. Sometimes these ideas are explained by Jaszczolt philosophically, as when she says that referential interpretations prevail in belief reports (*de re* interpretations). After many years of reading her ideas expressed in Jaszczolt (1999) (where she invokes phenomenology) I am not completely sure that her philosophical explanations work and this is the reason why I combined her ideas with the relevance theory framework – but now it could be said that the explanation could also be provided by making reference to the notion of informativeness worked out by Atlas and Levinson (1981). Thus, contrary to what Zhang and Zhang seem to presuppose, the marriage between Default Semantics and Relevance Theory is not necessary. One could use other theories to account for standardization.

What Zhang and Zhang seemed to miss was the constructive spirit of my paper, which was quite eclectic at that moment of my life. Now I would probably not write that paper again and I would even be less constrained either by Jaszczolt's or Relevance Theory's views. After all, we should not necessarily be constrained to any particular theory, to put it in the words of Riccardo Ambrosini (p.c.). I find that the method of philosophical inquiry used by Zhang and Zhang can be called 'Byronian instinctive contrariness', that attitude in which, in the course of being destructive, one ends up contradicting oneself in a very bad way many times. I am surprised that this spirit should still be so widespread in academia.

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