Metaphor, Relevance Theory, and the Curious Nature of Cut-Off Points.
A Philosophical Attempt to Understand the Tension Caused by Non-Propositional Effects

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How to account for metaphor has long been a contentious issue within pragmatics. Revisiting this debate, Wilson & Carston (2019) analyse Grice's oft-discussed exclusion of metaphor as an empirically unjustified use of cut-off points on the empirical continuum of language and link it a tension between his underlying focus on formalisation contrary to their aim of maximising pragmatics' empirical scope. In spite of the latter, Relevance Theory's various own models fail to account for essential characteristics of metaphor caused by certain non-propositional effects eluding its grasp and subsequently excluded. Rather than solving this with new tools, as Wilson & Carston propose, this paper seeks to examine the aforementioned tension and its link to the use of cut-off points they criticised. I will argue that Relevance Theory, too, uses cut-off points, highlighting their nature as the effect of a shared approach vis-à-vis formalisation rather than an individual flaw of Grice's: Both exclude certain empirical effects of language in pursuance of a unified theory of communication organised around the notion of intention and grounded in teleological assumptions external to language. Drawing on Derrida's analogous critique of Austin's pragmatics, I will illustrate the paradoxical nature of such cut-off points and possible ways forward.

— METAPHOR
— RELEVANCE THEORY

— DERRIDA
— PROBLEM OF INDETERMINACY

— NON-PROPOSITIONAL EFFECTS

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Introduction

Recent times have seen a range of rather diverse approaches in trying to get to the essence of metaphor, with their point of departure often being familiar theories of metaphor within classical representational semantics. Among many others, Robyn Carston and other Relevance theorists have sought to bridge the ongoing divide between these different scientific and philosophical approaches to metaphor and their often contradictory findings or, at times, reductionistic stances. Carston especially (e.g., 2012, 486-491) is interested in what other approaches to metaphor like Lakoff & Johnson's (1980) bring to the table and how it may complement the Relevance Theory. The latter was developed by Sperber & Wilson (1995) and, while hugely indebted to Paul Grice's pragmatics, it seeks to overcome what they deem to be some major shortcomings of Grice's theory, like its exclusion of metaphor.

Following their own empirical and cognitive approach, Sperber & Wilson (2008, 1) proposed of a « deflationary » account of metaphor, in which it was not « distinct » from other forms of speech and meaningful by virtue of the same process through which the meaning of literal speech is inferred. However, Carston (e.g., 2012, 482f) noted that there is an important kind of metaphor whose effects cannot be accounted for entirely in this way. These « novel/creative » (Wilson & Carston 2019, 36) metaphors are characterised by the fact that they are meaningful not because of their literal meaning (in fact, sometimes in spite of it) or what can be inferred from it pragmatically in the usual way, but through so-called *non-propositional effects*.

This term designates a particular range of interpretative effects of language which do not rely on their propositional meaning to effectuate their addressee but, for example, on the *mental imagery* they invoke: As sentences like « My lawyer is a shark » (Carston 2010, 195) illustrate, what is communicated through such language (aggression, danger, perhaps a certain disdain or the expectation of success) sometimes goes beyond or even differs entirely from what can be derived from its propositional meaning. That also makes them a good example of what in pragmatics is called *indeterminacy*: The phenomenon that part of the meaning of an utterance is not fixed by the intention of the speaker, but instead open-ended and (contingent on the) individual. Yet, while others may argue that this divides language into « distinct classes », Wilson & Carston (2019, 34) advocate a view of language and meaning with no such « clear cut-off point » between more conventional forms of meaning like Grice's speaker's meaning (cf. 2019, 31f) on one side and non-propositional effects on the other.

In light of this, any prospective new theory of metaphor should ideally: (a) be (part of) a theory of meaning which explains metaphorical use of language and its non-propositional effects, as epitomised by novel/creative metaphors, alongside other forms of language use, while also (b) explaining or justifying the distinctness of metaphor (and its meaning) in contrast to deflationary theories like Sperber & Wilson's or Davidson's (1978). Notably, after two approximations by Carston (2010; 2018), Wilson and she (2019) acknowledge that there is a wide range of non-propositional effects which, in all their « richness and variety » (2019, 38), still elude

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incorporation into the prevailing (Relevance-)theoretical paradigm and its notion of *weak implicature*. That's why they see attempts to develop « formal tools » (2019, 38) to do them justice as integral to the future of pragmatics.

To what extent and how the search for such tools may prove to be fruitful is an open question, though. Wilson & Carston not only point out a link between metaphor and the potential scope of pragmatics, but they also connect it to a certain tension that surfaced between the (ideally full) range of empirical effects of language to be covered by a theory and how well it lends itself to being formalised, i.e., how well it can be accounted for by providing a (limited) set of rules to account for these effects. Unfortunately, they do not examine this tension and how it might affect the tools they have been using very closely, nor do they provide suggestions for a more successful pursuit of new tools – to do so is the purpose of this essay. Specifically, I intend to take a close look at why the old tools fell short of meeting the « challenge of non-propositional effects » (2019, 33) and what this tension may have to do with it. As they are an integral part of all accounts of metaphor discussed here, I will focus primarily on the nature of what Wilson & Carston call cut-off points and demonstrate that the solutions Relevance Theory has offered thus far ultimately rely on the same kind of cut-off point with which Wilson & Carston take issue.

For this more root-and-branch inquiry into cut-off points and the purpose they serve, I will invoke the analysis that the philosopher Jacques Derrida (1988) has provided of the *speech act theory* of one of pragmatics' founding fathers, John Austin (1962). By means of what is essentially an immanent critique, Derrida demonstrates some of the flaws of Austin's theory, like its reliance on distinctions like that of *parasitic* and *ordinary* forms of speech. In Derrida's eyes, these distinctions somewhat artificially oppose empirical phenomena of speech while their common root, be it transcendental or empirical, is overlooked. He illustrates that, while the resulting distinctions may also reflect real linguistic phenomena, they are primarily grounded in assumptions foreign to the empirical phenomena investigated and serve the purpose of their formalisation.

In doing so, I hope to provide more than a comparison of Derrida's criticism of Austin and Relevance Theory's argument against Grice's exclusion of metaphor. Rather, Derrida's criticism will serve as a template to better understand the distinctions at the heart of Relevance Theory's own bid to formalise language, too, and judge it by its own standards. To this end, I will proceed in three sections and discuss (i) how Relevance Theory had sought to account for non-propositional effects so far through the notion of *weak implicature*; how this ties in with Wilson & Carston's recognition of both the link between accounting for metaphor and the boundary of pragmatics; and the apparent tension between a theory's focus on either empirical or formal prowess; (ii) Derrida's critique of Austin's speech act theory as a model for a de-constructive criticism of a pragmatic theory and the purpose of the cut-off points it employs; and (iii) that this line of criticism also applies to Relevance Theory and its use of cut-off points, including the demands this poses on Wilson & Carston's call for formal tools and other such attempts to formalise phenomena like non-propositional effects. I will conclude by suggesting how the juxtaposition of Relevance Theory and Derrida may contribute both to the

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further advancement of pragmatics and especially the philosophical and linguistic study of metaphor.

Metaphor and the Challenge of Non-Propositional Effects

Tellingly, Wilson & Carston open their paper on « [p]ragmatics and the challenge of ‹ non-propositional › effects » (2019) with an interesting observation: They make a distinction between « those who see pragmatics as primarily concerned with providing a theory of communication » and others who focus on « an investigation of language use » (2019, 31). The first camp, they note, tend to see Grice's notion of speaker's meaning as the outer limit of the scope of pragmatics, while the other camp, amongst which Wilson & Carston themselves as proponents of Relevance Theory, is more committed to accounting for as many empirical uses of language as possible, including the « natural, normal and pervasive » (Carston 2012, 480) use(s) of language called metaphor. The standard Relevance Theory had thus set for itself meant that it could neither content itself with an outright denial of metaphorical meaning like Davidson (1978), nor Grice's exclusion from the notion of meaning « on formal grounds » alone (Wilson & Carston 2019, 32).

But it is apparent from the outset that this not a debate about metaphor and non-propositional effects alone. Beneath it lies a dispute concerning the scope of pragmatics, particularly regarding non-propositional effects, and what the best strategy is to extend it as far as possible. That is why Wilson & Carston argue not only that Grice's exclusion of metaphor has no empirical merit or foundation, but also describe it as the result of Grice's focus on formalisation and his willingness to employ empirically unjustified cut-off points to that end. Crucially, this is no inevitable feature of pragmatics to them. Just like Relevance Theory had overcome the limitations this imposes on possible notions of meaning in the past, they seem to believe that this framework, and its underlying focusing on the empirical investigation of language use, can build on these successes.

One important success would be to account for non-propositional effects since some of them, as Wilson & Carston concede, still elude even Relevance Theory. That is why, in this section, I will argue that their own view on metaphor, including its criticism of Grice, culminates in an impasse or hitherto unfilled promise. Specifically, I will show that the notion of *weak implicature*, to which they ascribe an important role in accounting for non-propositional effects and indeterminacy, (a) relies on a cut-off point which excludes a significant part of the interpretative effects of metaphor, just like Grice had, and (b) does neither recognise nor relieve the underlying tension between the formalisation inherent to a pragmatic theory of language and its ability to cover its full range of empirical effects.

In the tripartition fundamental to Relevance Theory, *weak implicature* is all that is intentionally communicated through an utterance but not part of the propositional meaning of an utterance or its logical equivalents (i.e., *explicature*), nor logically derivable from it (i.e., *strong implicature*). These notions are far from neatly separated. They form a seamless continuum of meaning intended as a formalisation of the empirical continuum of interpretative effects. This allows Carston to mount a

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very plausible critique of Grice's notion of meaning arguing, among other things, that it is unduly restrictive, since it only encompasses the immediate propositional meaning of an utterance (cf. Carston 2006, 633). This excludes anything but *literal* uses of language (cf. 2006, 649), including empirically abundant forms of non-literal language like metaphor. Carston, on the other hand, can not only plausibly argue that weak implicature ought to be considered part of meaning, but that so do many kinds of non-propositional effects (e.g., 2006, 643; 2010, 311f), though not all as Sperber & Wilson hold (cf. 1995, 222; 2008).

Like all instances of communication in this conception (e.g., Sperber & Wilson 1995, 60f), weak implicature assumes the *mutual manifestness* of what is communicated. By definition, an information is manifest if it can be represented mentally and evaluated in its truth (cf. 1995, 39). It is *mutually* manifest if there is a shared understanding that this information is manifest for all the parties of a communicate act (cf. 1995, 41f). In Sperber & Wilson's view, this is only possible if these mental representation are amenable to the « logical form » (1995, 72) indispensable for the cognitive processing of information. Furthermore, these conceptual representations are *propositional* if they represent an actual or possible state of affairs. Only then can they be true or false and potentially made manifest. Their original hope was that this solves the « formal problem » (1995, 199) of indeterminacy thus: what may « look like non-propositional effects » (1995, 220) could now be explained in terms of weak implicature. Rather than hollowing out the communicative import of an utterance, indeterminacy is taken to be the effect of the extent to which what is communicated is made manifest (1995, 199). This conception allowed them to view indeterminacy as part of the empirical scope of their theory, rather than an external phenomenon threating to undermine it. The exclusion of empirical effects of language now seems to be unnecessary, at least not for the formal reasons invoked by Grice (cf. 1995, 196).

Indeed, since Sperber & Wilson (e.g., 2019, 50-54) see communication as, in short, the intentional manifestation of both an information and the intention to communicate it, the new limits of pragmatics are determined by the conditions identified as necessary for mutual manifestness. Moreover, mutual manifestness is not only a matter of degree, but also only intended as a description of cognitive states and effects without any epistemological bearing (cf. 2019, 39). This is in line with their entire approach, which is not only focused on the cognitive processes underlying language comprehension but also « grounded in a general view of human cognition » (2019, vii) which governs many aspects of their theory, like their conception of mental representation. However, as Wilson & Carston (2019, 36f) readily acknowledge, there are non-propositional effects which cannot be captured within such a framework after all, most notably mental imagery. They admit that the exclusion of mental imagery and other more indeterminate interpretative effects is not the effect of their empirical nature, but « really only defensible on formal grounds » (2019, 38), just as Grice's exclusion of figurative language had been to Sperber & Wilson before (cf. 1995, 196).

To close this explanatory gap, Wilson & Carston call for (new) formal tools to deal with indeterminacy in pragmatics. In doing so, they seem undeterred by their initial observation and the apparent tension

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between the contrasting aims of investigating language use and providing a theory of communication: While those championing the first will hope to yield an « empirically grounded » theory eventually covering the « full range of overtly intentional communicative acts » (2019, 34), the latter camp seems prone to erring on the side of excluding communicative acts for the purpose of « amenability to formalisation » (2019, 34), as Grice had. Indeed, as Wilson & Carston are surely aware, Sperber & Wilson had recently aimed to show that Relevance Theory had not only overtaken the empirical scope of Grice's theory, but that it had done so providing a « conceptually unified explanation », i.e., an « adequate theory of communication » (2015, 142).

Perhaps that is way Wilson & Carston claim that both approaches « can and should proceed together in pragmatics » (2019, 34). But, alas, they offer no insight into the origins of the apparent tension between these approaches, nor much guidance on how to consolidate the corresponding aims beyond pointing to Relevance Theory's past achievements as chronicled above. And while it may be true that the conception which facilitated the expansion of its scope, weak implicature, is grounded an empirical theory of human cognition and language comprehension, it is hard not to notice that it also results in the same kind of « clear cut-off point » (2019, 34) against which Wilson & Carston argued earlier: It differentiates between two classes of effects of language rather than treating it as the continuum they had asserted it is, cutting off the latter's non-propositional end.

Thus, at the end of the day, Relevance Theory only succeeds in shifting the boundaries of pragmatics rather than getting rid of them. As non-propositional effects like mental imagery demonstrate, Relevance Theory is still unable to formalise all empirical effects of language: not only is (a) its empirical scope still limited by the cut-off point attached to the notion of mutual manifestness, but (b) the lurking tension between focussing on empirical completeness or formalisation remains unresolved as well. While both may ideally go hand in hand, the continuum of available formalizations of language is yet to be superimposable with the empirical continuum of language. Indeed, it is where the latter exceeds the first that cut-off points appear. If Wilson & Carston ever had any doubts about the possibility of accounting for more indeterminate non-propositional effects or being able to do both aims justice and close this chasm, they do not show them. Legitimate as that may be, one may be excused for asking some questions in return: Is it possible to ground cut-off points empirically? Is it even necessary, or could they be justified otherwise? Or do they turn out to only be artifacts of a particular mode of formalisation, as undesirable as they may be inevitable? And if so, how can the issue of indeterminacy be taken on more sustainably?

Of Austin and a Certain « Theoretical and Interested Uncertainty » at the Heart of his Theory

Similar questions seem to be on Derrida's mind in his famous (1988) critique of Austin's speech act theory. I will reiterate those aspects which might prove informative for pragmatics' current challenges: First, I will briefly introduce his analysis of Austin's speech act theory and the roles intention and consciousness play in the formalisation at the heart of

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Austin's theory, as both are still critical to how Relevance Theory operates. Thereafter, I will review Derrida's analysis of Austin's exclusion of parasitic speech from his pragmatics and the structural features of his theory that it betrays. This is equally relevant, as Derrida manages to expose the questionable justification of this exclusion as well as how its underlying teleology interacts with its function in aiding formalisation and arriving at a theory of communication transcending classical semantics.

The latter is one of the aspects of Austin's theory that interests Derrida the most. He notes that Austin's analysis of speech focuses on perlocution, illocution and their *force* rather than a classical notion meaning as the communication of contents of thought through a linguistic exchange of its propositional representations. That's what Derrida means when he applauds Austin for considering *all* speech acts, including utterances seemingly accounted for though the traditional model, « as acts of communication » (Derrida 1988, 13). By focussing on those perlocutionary and illocutionary forces so far excluded from meaning, Austin can show that performative speech especially « produces or transforms a situation » (1988, 13) by means of said forces. This insight, however, is generalised and results in a pragmatic notion of speech which « does not have its referent [...] outside of itself » (ibid.) and does not need to, since the force inherent to communication assures that speech has its desired effect, i.e., has (a) meaning.

As it turns out, however, Austin's theory is not as radically different as it may seem at first. Derrida remarks that one of the essential elements determining the meaning of an utterance is « the conscious presence of the intention of the speaking subject » (1988, 14). Communication hence remains the « communication of an intentional meaning » (1988, 14). More importantly however, in Derrida's view, this presence of consciousness « implies teleologically that no *residue* [*reste*] escapes the present totalization » (1988, 14 emphasis his). In essence, Derrida claims that because intention and thus consciousness remain at the centre of this theory of communication, nothing is supposed to be able to challenge the conceptually unified notion of meaning (cf. 1988, 14) essential to any formalisation.

In other words, intention makes sure that nothing escapes the grasp of the tool Austin uses to formalise meaning: No empirical ambiguities and certainly no theoretical indeterminacy. Even though especially the latter may feasibly challenge Austin's ‹ totalisation › in some circumstances, Austin's theory allows for no such residue to challenge the idea that the empirical continuum of language use is both entirely amenable to this operation of formalisation and therefore accounted for by his theory. Except for one important proviso: Austin unambiguously recognises that all speech acts carry with them the risk of failure to achieve their intended effect. But Derrida points out that after recognising this as a « structural possibility », Austin immediately « excludes that risk as accidental, exterior », as if it « teaches us nothing about the linguistic phenomenon being considered » (15). In short: The existence of all that might challenge Austin's theory is not entirely denied. Indeed, it is recognised but subsequently downplayed in its importance. Ultimately, this serves to justify its exclusion from the scope of Austin's investigation.

This operation of exclusion is not limited to but one instance, but a particularly insightful example is when an « ill which may infect *all*

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utterances » is identified by Austin but deliberately excluded: utterances « said by an actor on the stage » or « introduced in a poem » are ostensibly not « serious » instances of language use and « in many ways *parasitic* » upon its normal use under « ordinary circumstances » (Austin 1962, 21f, as quoted by Derrida 1988, 16). Derrida points out that this is akin to an *ontological* boundary being drawn between different empirical instances of language use while being underpinned by a *teleological* distinction between ordinary and parasitic uses of language. This distinction, however, is not supported by independent considerations of facts or linguistic determinations external to that division. Rather, as Derrida points out, it is enclosed in a self-fulfilling « teleological determination » of what constitutes ordinary uses of language and subsequently treated as a mere description of fact (Derrida 1988, 17).

To Derrida, this is untenable not last because it contradicts Austin's « ironic denunciation of the ‹ fetishized › opposition: *value/fact* » (1988, 15), in light of which justifying any ontological exclusion teleologically proves to be a vicious circle. Rather than using whatever may be the overlapping nature of values and fact to arrive at a theory of language not reliant on such a distinction, Austin uses the consanguinity of value and fact to camouflage ontological exclusions as teleological determinations. That is to say: The irrelevance of the phenomena excluded from the range of language being investigated is determined teleologically. This determination is then, implicitly or explicitly, justified through the empirical success of the resulting theory. Its ability account for all the empirical uses of language *within its scope* is mistaken for evidence that this exclusion represents an actual empirical reality or is otherwise justified by the phenomenon being investigated.

This vicious circle is sedimented in the paradoxical nature of the operation which ultimately proved fundamental to Austin's mode of formalisation: distinction and subsequent exclusion. Derrida does not deny that the boundaries thus drawn may (also) circumscribe specific empirical realities. But his point is that within the distinction thus made, the two terms « do not exclude what is generally opposed to them » but rather « presuppose it, in an asymmetrical way » (1988, 19). According to this essentially transcendental argument, only this presupposition allows for the subsequent distinction to be made. The subsequent exclusion then completes the act of drawing the teleologically (pre)determined boundary. As a result, especially the distinction between what lies within the scope of a theory and what doesn't justifies and perpetuates itself, preventing any possible residues of an empirical or theoretical nature from undermining the theory from the outside.

To counteract this, Derrida reminds his readers that drawing such boundaries reflects a deliberate choice on Austin's part. It unduly establishes as facts a chain of interconnected teleological assumptions or, which is the same thing, ontological exclusions which are ultimately not necessarily reflective of the empirical phenomenon of language or other linguistic determinations: the total presence of context, of intentions, and therefore of the very unity of meaning ostensibly acknowledged elsewhere as merely an abstract, « philosophical », ideal by Austin (1988, 17).

Ultimately, the lesson to be learned is that this all serves to exclude a certain « theoretical and ‹ interested › uncertainty », (1988, 18) beneath

the distinctions upon which Austin's theory is built. This uncertainty is *theoretical* in that it is an artifact of Austin's mode of formalisation with no bearing on empirical language and *interested* in that any exclusion of a teleological nature, especially if it isn't justified empirically, is not neutral towards the phenomena under investigation. Rather, it is grounded in the non-linguistic notions of consciousness and intention and embedded within the system of « logocentrism » (1988, 20; cf. Derrida 1976) analysed by Derrida elsewhere. Importantly, Derrida stresses that this does not mean that the concepts Austin devises may not also correspond to real effects of language or that the resulting theory fails to explain a (perhaps significant) share of communicative acts. Rather, this indicates that any formalisation in this mould, from its very inception, excludes certain residual speech acts (whose existence is attested to by both Austin and Derrida) *and* the values which may guide or help explain them. However, the underlying uncertainty isn't resolved in this way, it is merely declared insignificant and externalised.

The Nature of Cut-Off Points and their Mark on Relevance Theory

To my mind, there is little doubt that Austin's distinctions and the various cut-off points discussed earlier are of the same nature. Given Grice's side-lining of metaphor as an « abnormal or at least indirect » form of communication (cf. Carston 2012, 470), the parallels between Austin and Grice are probably obvious enough. But even though Wilson & Carston saw right through Grice's reasoning and clearly stated that cut-off points can be empirically unfounded by-products of a formalisation by means of such value-laden, external assumptions, they never seem to apply this insight to their own theory. To clarify that the distinctions Relevance Theory employs are not exempt from this criticism, I will demonstrate that weak implicature and its underlying cut-off point imply not only the applicability of their own critique of Grice, but also of the points Derrida raises regarding Austin. Ultimately, this explains why the cut-off point of mutual manifestness, and the exclusion at its heart, neither menage to explain all non-propositional effects nor to resolve the tension between empirical completeness and formal adequacy. I will conclude by introducing the alternatives Derrida offers, like his notion of a *differential typology*.

In a nutshell, Derrida demonstrated that the cut-off points at the heart of a theory are characterised by an inside, an outside, and an external justification by some sort of a teleological or philosophical ideal. While not technically a part of the distinction, the latter is necessary to justifying an otherwise unfounded exclusion with the sole aim of increasing the amenability to formalisation of what lies within the empirical scope of the resulting theory thus outlined. Sperber & Wilson's attempt to integrate indeterminacy into their theory works the same way. By determining that meaning (i) be principally effable in (truth-)propositional terms; (ii) have some relation to an external state of affairs; and (iii) be governed by the intention of the speaker, they exclude all other effects of language which do not meet these criteria.

In Wilson & Carston's paper, this is apparent in two ways: When they identify «covering the *full range* of *overtly intentional* communicative

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acts » (2019, 34, emphasis mine) as the ideal pursued by Relevance Theory as an empirically grounded theory, they exclude all that the effects of language not associated with overt intentionality (i.e., mutual manifestness; cf. Sperber & Wilson 2015). An important and empirically abundant example of the kinds of effects that fall victim to this are non-propositional effects like mental imagery. As a consequence, they can only describe them as « by-products » (2019, 38) of the kind of communication which constitutes the scope Relevance Theory, and not as effects of language significant on their own terms. This classification of non-propositional effects as by-products not only exactly mirrors Derrida's interpretation of Austin, but also their own criticism of (2019, 32): they recognise their existence but exclude them for the sake of the cohesion of their theory. Yet this evidently did not preclude the problem of indeterminacy from resurfacing in the form of non-propositional effects like mental imagery.

Following Derrida, this can be understood as an effect of the central role Relevance Theory awards to mutual manifestness. Indeed, the very distinction between propositional and non-propositional effects is governed by, in short, whether an effect conforms to the conditions of mutual manifestness mentioned above. But these conditions are not derived from the empirical investigation of language use, they reflect the cognitive framework which grounds Sperber & Wilson's theory. The problem of indeterminacy therefore reappears at the point where the empirical continuum of language exceeds the explanatory scope of their theory and its underlying assumptions. However, because of the non-linguistic basis of this theory, the emerging boundary or explanatory gap cannot logically be attributed to the empirical nature of non-propositional effects, or of language more generally.

Ultimately, it does not make a difference whether these distinctions may also correspond to specific empirical phenomena and their underlying differences. Derrida's argument relies on an underlying continuity, whether it be somewhat transcendental as the iterability he discusses (Derrida 1988, 15; 17f), or the empirical continuum Wilson & Carston assume. In light of this continuity, any distinction which only reflects the differences but not the similarities, as cut-off points do, must either be justified externally. Given the ontological continuity mentioned just now, this justification can only be teleological. But once it is recognised as external to the phenomenon or dismissed for other reasons, the distinction is revealed as the empty « formal grounds » Wilson & Carston (2019, 38) bemoan, i.e., an (in this case empirically) unfounded assumption with little merit beyond safeguarding the integrity of the boundaries which they are used to draw.

A better course of action, Derrida thinks, is to refrain from such exclusions in favour of a (more) general theory grounded in this shared nature. In short, Derrida proposes that rather than seeking external teleological support to stabilise exclusions that provide a one-sided view at best, common ground be found between what had earlier been divided by distinction, without erasing obviously existing differences. To this end, not only the reversal or renunciation of any one distinction employed within a theory is indicated, but also the « general *displacement* of the system » (Derrida 1988, 20, emphasis original) of this theory and underlying assumptions are necessary, if potentially not sufficient, to move beyond

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such a mode of formalisation and arrive at a « differential typology » (1988, 18) within a more general of language. In this way, had hitherto been excluded can be awarded space on its own terms rather than divided by yet another distinction foreign to it.

This explicitly entails, if not necessitates, a recourse to « nondiscursive » entites (1988, 21) such as Austin's force of communication as long as they are not external to language, like a theory of cognition, nor seek to divide its field, like a distinction between propositional and non-propositional effects. Austin initially makes a big step towards such a typology through his focus on the communicative force and the performative as the form of speech in which it is most readily observable: He reinstates performative meaning as a form of meaning even more fundamental than its classical, « constative » (1988, 13), counterpart. But rather than being content with the reversal of one, however fundamental, opposition, he goes on to displace the classical semantical or code model of language more generally (cf. 1988, 19). Alas, as indicated above, Austin eventually reverts to various cut-off points and so falls back into a mode of formalisation where exclusions divide and organise the continuum of language which may be united in its communicative force.

Likewise, Relevance Theory has displaced not only the distinction between literal and figurative language (cf. Carston 2012, 481f), but also the entire system which produce it. One may say they did so because of the theoretical and interested uncertainty that Grice, unsuccessfully, sought to exclude from his theory. This uncertainty, at least in Derrida's analysis of the performative, had a close connection to the part of the continuum of language home to « singular and original event-utterances » (Derrida 1988, 18). Without being able to do this claim full justice here, I believe that this is what Wilson & Carston mean when they refer to interpretative effects which are more open-ended, « highly context-sensitive and often dependent on contingencies » (Wilson & Carston 2019, 33f) and therefore pose a challenge also to current pragmatics. However, this qualification of Derrida's not a distinction: Singularity is, to a different degree, characteristic of all forms of language. And it is this shared attribute which, in Derrida's view, opens a « cleft » between the empirical effects of language and the speaker's intention which is an « essential » characteristic of language (Derrida 1988, 18). And it is this singularity which causes the theoretical uncertainty usually addressed through its exclusion.

Its *attempted* exclusion, I should say. As Relevance Theory's problem of indeterminacy shows, this singularity, and the resulting theoretical uncertainty, appears wherever boundaries are drawn. And due to this cleft, neither the presence of intention, nor indeed any theory of cognition, will ever be able to resolve the tension caused by an exclusion of a distinct range of effects of language supposedly free of this uncertainty. Be it by distinguishing literal from figurative language, its propositional from its non-propositional effects, or perhaps even its empirical from its formal aspects, it is the nature of cut-off points that they will solidify, not resolve, the tensions thus evoked. Yet this is the conception which underlies Wilson & Carston's analysis of the problem and to which they seem as committed as ever.

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Conclusion

Rather than understanding the nature of metaphor or of communication using cut-off points, as Relevance Theory does, I wanted to shed a light on the paradoxicalities invoked, or at least not resolved, when using cut-off points to formalise language. It was this undercurrent that I was most interested in because I believe it explains a lot about the waves metaphor has caused in pragmatics.

However, this leaves a lot to be desired, including an explanation of metaphor's particular relevance to this debate which, alas, I can only hint at it: Not only has it been a contentious issue in pragmatics for a long time, other texts of Derrida's suggest a more structural role of metaphor as a source of frustration for theories of language: A detailed analysis of some of its historic definitions leads Derrida (cf. 1982) to conclude that the notion of metaphor is grounded in but at the same time undermining not only the linguistic concepts used to capture its essence but also the metaphysical (logocentric) assumptions that they underpin. Moreover, metaphor and its formalisation, too, oscillate between the formalisation of meaning and the singular character of language use as event. Thus, the cleft between intention and utterance mentioned earlier does not only impose itself in Austin's notion of the performative, but also in metaphor. Arguably, this has been apparent in pragmatics for a long time (cf. Lemmer 2022).

While Derrida addressed the paradoxicality of classical descriptions of metaphor actually given, the paradoxicality of its exclusion in pragmatics is an important point of departure for Relevance Theory. But, as I demonstrated, while going some way towards what Derrida is proposing, Relevance Theory does not resolve the tension caused by this exclusion. On the contrary, the tension is recognised through the problem of indeterminacy and eventually even analysed more deeply by Wilson & Carston, but the only result are less restrictive cut-off points. In this way, the problem of indeterminacy is perpetually deferred, not solved. Hence my intention to analyse the nature of cut-off points and highlight the structural problems underlying it. Solving them remains a challenge. But the general theory of language Derrida calls for requires much more than additional formal tools to deal with particular issues. If Relevance Theory is to truly be an investigation of (the full range of) empirical language use in the spirit of Wilson & Carston *and* succeed in providing a theory of communication, new approaches are what is called for.

This debate has seen several bold steps in the past. Hopefully, this paper has contributed to establishing the direction in which to go even further. In any event, works like Garello & Carapezza's (in press) and their multimodal account of metaphor comprehension might already be advancing towards a differential typology of interpretative effects of language. Hopefully, they are paving the way for much more to come.

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