A Demonstrative Analysis of ‘Open Quotation’

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Abstract: A striking feature of Cappelen and Lepore’s Davidsonian theory of quotation is the range of the overlooked data to which it offers an elegant semantical analysis. Recently, François Recanati argued for a pragmatic account of quotation, on the basis of new data that Cappelen and Lepore overlooked. In this article I expose what seem to me the weak points in Recanati’s alternative approach, and show how proponents of the demonstrative theory can account for the data on which Recanati bases his theory.

The demonstrative theory of quotation, as first developed by Davidson, and as elaborated and modified by Cappelen and Lepore, has been widely discussed. In a recent paper titled ‘Open Quotation’, François Recanati has advanced an alternative approach based on overlooked data, which is, perhaps, the most profound challenge the demonstrative theory has faced until now. In what follows, I expose what seems to me the weak points in Recanati’s alternative approach, and show how proponents of the demonstrative theory can account for the data on which Recanati bases his theory.

1. The Demonstrative Theory of Quotation: Two Fundamental Ideas

A striking feature of Cappelen and Lepore’s Davidsonian theory of quotation is the range of the overlooked data to which it offers an elegant semantical analysis, an analysis which implies that quotation marks ‘function in the same way and have the same semantic value whatever linguistic context they occur in’ (Cappelen and Lepore, 1997, p. 434).

Let me illustrate. Consider:

(1) Alice said, ‘life is difficult to understand’. [Direct quotation].
(2) Alice said that life ‘is difficult to understand’. [Mixed quotation].
(3) Alice said that life is difficult to understand. [Indirect quotation].
(4) ‘Londres est jolie’ is not an English sentence. [Pure quotation].
(5) ‘#’ is not a phrase in any language. [Pure quotation].

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The first question addressed by Cappelen and Lepore is semantical:

(Q1) What is the semantical relationship between (2) and (3), on the one hand, and (1) and (2), on the other?

The second question is grammatical:

(Q2) How is the grammaticality of (4)–(5) to be explained, given the fact that each of them seems, at least on the surface, to be composed of items that are not part of the English lexicon (items like ‘#’, and ‘Londres est jolie’).

Two fundamental ideas are at the heart of the semantic analysis advanced by Cappelen and Lepore. The first is that, at least from a deep-structural or semantical standpoint, the quoted material in direct and pure quotations (like (1), (4) and (5)) is not part of the main sentence. Thus, the logical forms of (4) and (1) are, respectively,

(LF–4) Londres est jolie. For every x, if x same-tokens this, x is not an English sentence.

(LF–1) There is an utterance, u, such that Alice uttered u, and u same-tokens this. Life is difficult to understand.

The speaker of direct and pure quotations first produces a series of sounds, and then says that everything that ‘same-tokens’ those sounds or that string of symbols has a certain property. The same-token relation expresses our rough daily intuitions concerning the features of particulars that make them tokens of the same symbol. These intuitions are radically context dependent and free from any a-priori constraints. The second idea is that in essence the same is true of indirect quotations (like (3)). The complement clause in (3) is not part of the sentence in which it is embedded. To indirectly quote a speaker is to utter something and to claim that it same-says an utterance that the speaker pronounced. Hence, (3)’s logical form:

(LF–3) There is an utterance, u, such that Alice utters u, and u same-says that. Life is difficult to understand.

Thus the same-say relation is supposed to stand for our rough and ready judgments about what utterances can be used in reporting others’ speech acts. With the help of the ‘same-tokens’ and ‘same-says’ predicates, Cappelen and Lepore construct the logical form of mixed quotation:

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1 See Davidson’s ‘Quotation’ and his ‘On Saying That’ (both reprinted in Davidson, 1984) and, mainly, Cappelen and Lepore, 1997.
(LF–2) There is an utterance, u, such that Alice utters u, and u same-says that, and u same-tokens these. Life is difficult to understand.

In (LF–2), the first demonstrative refers to the whole token of ‘Life is difficult to understand’, and the second, only to the token of the phrase, ‘is difficult to understand’. Mixed quotation is conceived as a combination of direct and indirect quotation: an existential generalization of a conjunction of a sentence in which tokens of words are referred to by ‘same-say this’ and a sentence in which a subset of the same tokens are referred to by ‘same-token this’.

The analysis sketched here yields simple answers to the above questions. Take the first question (Q1): (2) implies (3) on the basis of the conjunction rule, and both (2) and (1) structurally imply that Alice said, ‘difficult to understand’. As for (Q2), despite appearances to the contrary, ‘Londres est jolie’, ‘#’ are not components of the sentences in which they occur. Rather, they are the demonstrated items of the deep structural phrase, ‘same-token this’.

I find these answers plausible and elegant, so I believe that Recanati’s challenge should lead us to modify rather than desert the theory from which they follow.

2. Recanati’s Challenge

Recanati’s basic observation is that the demonstrative theory fails to account for the phenomenon of ‘open quotation’, a title for a large set of sentences whose logical form cannot contain the phrase ‘same-tokens that’ despite the fact that they include quotes.\(^2\) Here are some examples:

(8) Then, the storyteller cleared his throat. ‘Once upon a time, there was a beautiful princess named Arabella . . . .’

Next, think of Bob echoing a peculiar use of the word ‘smart’ by Alice:

(9) Nicola is ‘smart’.

Finally, imagine that Alice consistently calls McPherson—a physicist whom she very much appreciates—‘Einstein’. Bob does not like the comparison, so he says,

(10) Stop it, Alice, ‘Einstein’ is not that smart.

Recanati is right that (8)–(10) involve no reference to words, as, obviously, there is no way to read them as judgments about the quoted material that occurs in them.

Furthermore, (9)–(10) seem to be ordinary singular judgments, in which the speaker attributes a property to a person.

Demonstrative theorists might try two solutions, neither of which is attractive. Some would take the ‘quotation marks’ in (9)–(10) to be ‘inverted comas’, an ad hoc linguistic measure marking an unusual use of words. These signs just look like quotation marks, but in fact, they are not. Others might try to read them elliptically. For instance, they would present (9) as:

\[(9') \quad \text{Nicola is (what Alice calls) 'smart'.}\]

It should be agreed that the first attempt to explain away open quotations is to be adopted only as a last resort; it presents certain signs as systematically ambiguous. The second attempt is also problematic. (9') says, in effect, that Nicola has a property that Alice expresses by uttering ‘smart’. Or, that there is a property, which Alice expresses by the word ‘smart’, that Nicola instantiates. Presenting (9) and (9') as equivalent seems to load too much structure on (9). It is presented as if it involves quantification over properties.

3. Recanati’s Pragmatic Approach: a Sketch

Recanati’s theory unfolds in three main stages. The first introduces the distinction between closed quotations, which involve reference to words (cases like (1), (4)–(5)) and open quotations, which do not (cases, (8)–(10)). At this stage, Recanati seeks to explain what closed and open quotations are, and to articulate the feature that they have in common. In the next stage, Recanati argues that so-called ‘mixed quotation’—cases like (2)—is a special case of open quotation. Finally, Recanati struggles with counterexamples.

I will not discuss in detail or debate the analysis Recanati offers for (9)—which is, perhaps, the paradigmatic case of open quotation. I shall confine myself to introducing it in a general way. Here is one of Recanati’s illuminating examples. Suppose someone said something silly. I want to mimic her, so I reproduce the sentence that she has just uttered, and adopt her gestures. ‘Am I referring to her utterance?’ No! Rather, ‘I am picturing her speech and, through that picture, conveying something about it. I show how silly her speech was. That is not the same thing as saying that her speech was silly. No reference [to words] takes place . . .’ (Recanati, 2001, p. 648).\(^3\) For Recanati, quotation marks ‘conventionally indicate that the enclosed material is displayed for demonstrative purposes rather than used in the normal way’ (p. 649). But, and this is crucial, in the aforementioned sentences the displayed words—the quoted material—not only occur but also ‘carry [their] normal meaning’ (p. 652). The demonstration, in these cases, is

\(^3\) Hereafter, I shall cite to Recanati’s 2001 paper only by page numbers.
part of mimicking a person by using the words she used. Thus, the normal meanings of these words are components of the semantic content of the sentence in which they occur. In fact, asserting (9) is asserting its disquoted version (9–d)

(9–d) Nicola is smart.

By asserting (9) rather than (9–d) Bob does something else in addition to asserting, he mimics Alice.

In the next stage we are offered an argument for classifying cases of the so-called ‘mixed quotation’ (cases like (2)), as open quotations. Recanati’s thought here is simple. He observes that there is no good reason to distinguish (2) (Alice said that life ‘is difficult to understand’) from (9). The proposition expressed in (2), he suggests, is that Alice said that life is difficult to understand. As before, when Bob reports: Alice said that life ‘is difficult to understand’, he speaks like Alice but he does not say that he speaks like her. Put differently, Bob implicitly ascribes to Alice the use of the words ‘is difficult to understand’ by using it in an ostensibly echoic manner. Yet, this ascription is not part of the semantic content of the report.

Does Recanati deny that (2) implies that Alice said, ‘difficult to understand’? Yes and no. On the one hand, the only proposition that is ‘compositionally articulated’ in (2) is the disquoted report: Alice said that life is difficult to understand. Yet, on the other hand, ‘sometime there is pragmatic enrichment of truth-conditional content. Since this is so we need to distinguish between the compositionally articulated content of the utterance (c-content) and its intuitive truth conditional content (i-content)’ (p. 673). Pragmatically, (2) does imply that Alice said, ‘difficult to understand’, but this is only (2)’s conventional implicature rather than something that is explicitly expressed by it. That Alice used the words ‘difficult to understand’ is a result of the ‘pragmatic enrichment of the truth conditional content’ of (2) (p. 671). Put differently, according to Recanati, the c-content of a mixed quotation is the c-content of its disquoted version—the only possible difference in content is a difference in the intuitive content.

Recanati is well aware of the fact that this solution will not do for cases like (10). It is not generally true that the c-content of open quotations is the c-content of their disquoted counterparts. To see this, consider (10)’s disquoted counterpart:

(10–d) Stop it, John, Einstein is not that smart.

Needless to say, (10)’s c-content is different from (10–d)’s c-content, since the former expresses the proposition that McPherson is not that smart, while the latter, that Einstein is not that smart. But even in such a case, Recanati maintains that his pragmatic approach works. He first observes that ‘the expression within the quotation marks is not used with its standard meaning, but with the meaning it has for the person whose use is being echoically simulated’ (p. 674). This seems
obviously correct—in a clear sense Bob uses someone else’s idiolect. Recanati takes this fact to support his thesis that quotation marks have a pragmatic rather than semantic role—they function at the level of language selection, and as Kaplan contends, ‘given an utterance, semantics cannot tell us what expression was uttered or what language it was uttered in. This is a presemantics task’ (p. 676). In a sense, (10) is (10–d) uttered in a different language (as an analogy, think of the sound ‘nine’/’nein’) in English and in German). It is a convention to interpret (10) in accordance with Alice’s idiolect due to the occurrence of quotation marks in it — and because of this convention the c-content of (10) is different from the standard reading of (10–d).

4. A Difficulty in Recanati’s Account

Recanati believes that conventions generate a genuine aspect of content—the ‘intuitive content’—that justifies inferring that Alice used the words ‘difficult to understand’ from the report: Alice said that life is ‘difficult to understand’. Having said that, he insists that the latter proposition is expressed ‘holistically’. By using quotation marks the speaker implies, but does not assert, that the ‘condition governing their use obtains’ (p. 663).

I believe that this approach misses the phenomenon of mixed quotations rather than explains it. Consider,

(11) Life is difficult to understand. Alice said that, moreover, she used some of these very words.

In this case, the first sentence in (11) is uttered for two reasons. By referring to it, Bob reports what Alice said, and by referring to it again he reports how she said it. It is my linguistic intuition that, usually, the speaker of (2) intends to do the same two things. But in Recanati’s account, only the indirect report is really asserted in (2), while the direct report is expressed ‘holistically’.

Admittedly, this cannot be considered as a difficulty for the pragmatic approach, since apparently Recanati’s linguistic intuitions are different from mine. But there is a real problem in Recanati’s account, which stems from cases that I have not yet discussed. Consider,

(13) Nicola is a ‘philtosopher’.
(14) Alice said that Nicola is a ‘philtosopher’.

Now, for Recanati, these sentences should be understood as their disquoted versions put in someone else’s idiolect:

(13–d) *Nicola is a philtosopher.
(14–d) *Alice said that Nicola is a philtosopher.
It is hard to disagree with Recanati about this. But, still, Recanati’s theory cannot explain why (13) and (14) are grammatical English sentences while (13–d) and (14–d) are clearly ungrammatical. After all, the nonword ‘philtosopher’ occurs in (13–d) and (14–d) as much as it occurs in (13) and (14).

Confronted by this question, Recanati rejoined that ‘in (14–d) and (13–d) there is a nonword. In (13) and (14) there is . . . an English word that the speaker creates on the spot by appropriating the resources of someone else’s language . . . The quotation marks indicate that this operation is taking place. (13) and (14) therefore belong less to the standard dialect of English than to a (legitimate) extension of English’ (personal correspondence). I disagree: Recanati’s response is based on an unusual, and, to my mind, unacceptable, conception of lexicons. By their nature, lexicons are not flexible to the extent that people are able to extend them on the spot. After all, the rationale of introducing the notion of lexicon is a presentation of a limited, and relatively well-defined, set of ‘building blocks’ from which well-formed formulas are constructed. Had lexicons been extendable in the way Recanati thinks they are, they would have lost their publicity and learnability.

I do not take this last point to be a conclusive argument against the pragmatic view that Recanati recommends, but only as another reason for not forgoing the demonstrative theory of quotation and the classical notion of content it employs. The main reason for trying a Davidson-like semantic account of open quotation is simple: this theory elegantly explains the logical relations among (1)–(5).

5. A Demonstrative Theory of Open Quotation

5.1. On the Difference between Semantic and Real Contexts of Use

Before arguing for a demonstrative analysis of open quotation, I would like to briefly discuss another phenomenon—indexicals, in order to point out an analogy between this phenomenon and that of open quotation. Suppose the following sentences were uttered in a certain context c:

(16) I am tall.
(17) You are handsome.

Additionally, suppose that with respect to c, the referent of ‘I’ is Gödel, and the referent of ‘you’ is Schmidt. In Kaplan’s well-known view, the propositions expressed in this context of use are, respectively:

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4 Some are hesitant with regard to the grammaticality of (13) and (14), and others with regard to the ungrammaticality of (13–d) and (14–d). But every English speaker that I know agrees that the former pair is much ‘better,’ in terms of grammaticality, than the latter pair.

5 I claim elsewhere that Cappelen and Lepore have no answer to this question. For the full discussion, see Benbaji, 2004, pp. 97–99.
(16’) Gödel is tall.
(17’) Schmidt is handsome.

Yet, understanding (16) and (17) in a context c is not knowing of them that they express these propositions. Rather it involves knowing how to determine their content in c and in any other context of use. In particular, understanding (16) and (17) involves knowing the character of ‘I’ and ‘you’:

(CI) ‘I’ refers to the speaker or writer.
(CY) ‘You’ refers to the addressee of the speaker or the writer.

But despite the meaning difference, the pairs (16’)\(\backslash(16)\) and (17’)\(\backslash(17)\) are of sentences whose content is the same. For, indexicals have descriptive meaning whose role is to specify the proposition expressed by sentences in which they occur with respect to a given context of use. This semantic property is (what Kaplan calls) the non-stable character that indexicals have.⁶

In contrast, proper names have no such meaning: knowing how the name ‘Gödel’ (or a more common proper name like ‘John Smith’) acquired its referent in c is irrelevant to understanding (16’). Why? After all, the same name might have different referents in different contexts of use. Kaplan and some other direct reference theorists believe that the meaning of ‘Gödel’ is nothing but its referent. In their view, proper names have no context-dependent features, so that their character is stable. Hence, even if there are relevant facts about how the referent of a proper name was fixed, these facts belong to the pre- or meta-semantical level.

One way of making the difference clear is to distinguish between semantic and the real (pragmatic) contexts of use. The Kaplanian way of doing so consists of segregating a list of expressions whose content is presented by the semantic theory as dependent on some specific features of the context of use. In Kaplan’s view, the only items of this list are indexicals and other demonstratives. The semantics of these expressions produce a subclass of features of the real context of use, a subclass that constitutes the semantic or the Kaplanian context. The special status of this sub-class follows from the fact that the context-dependence of the content of indexicals is encoded in their linguistic meaning.⁷ (Notice that, as the ‘John Smith’ example clearly shows, these features are not the only content-determining features of the context. In fact, it might be true that there is no definite list of features necessary for determining content.)⁸

In the next subsection, I shall claim that the best semantic account of “‘smart’”, “‘Einstein’” and “‘philosopher’” which respectively appear in (9), (10) and (13)

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⁶ In Kaplan’s words: ‘the descriptive meaning of a pure indexical determines the referent of the indexical with respect to a context of use but is either inapplicable or irrelevant to determining a referent with respect to a circumstance of evaluation’ (Kaplan, 1989, p. 500).
⁷ For an illuminating discussion, see Recanati, 2000, p. 292–95.
⁸ But see Recanati, 2000, pp. 295–300.
forces us to enrich the semantic context of use. Indeed, the context-dependence of the content of these phrases is encoded in the linguistic meaning of the quotation marks that occur in them. That is, the role of the quotation marks in the above-mentioned sentences is to specify the proposition expressed by a particular utterance of the sentences in which they occur, as a function of the context of use. Crucially, the content is determined in accordance with rules of the language. Open quotations have non-stable character, just like formulas in which demonstratives essentially occur. I shall conclude that Recanati’s theory correctly specifies the propositions that open quotations express, but it misses the semantic mechanism that determines these propositions. It misses, in other words, their character.

5.2. The Semantics of the Paradigmatic Cases of Open Quotation
Here, then, is my demonstrative theory of open quotation. First, consider the paradigmatic cases:

(9) Nicola is ‘smart’.
(10) ‘Einstein’ is not that smart.
(13) Nicola is a ‘philosopher’.

These are all sentences that express singular propositions: they are to be constructed from the matrix ‘x is P’ by replacing ‘x’ with a singular referring term whose role is to provide an argument for the function ‘P’ expressed by the matrix. But the referring expression in (10) and the predicates in (9) and (13) are not simple phrases that belong to the English lexicon. Rather, they are complex terms with context-sensitive elements. Specifically, the phrases used in these sentences are not the unstructured items ‘smart’, ‘philosopher’ and ‘Einstein’, but rather the complex phrases “‘smart’”, “‘philosopher’” and “‘Einstein’”, that we may call ‘twice quotes.’

In order to formulate the rules in accordance with which the referent of twice quotes is determined, we have to enrich the notion of semantic context of use. The Kaplanian notion originally included the speaker of the utterance, the time, the place, and the world in which it was uttered. A missing element is that of echoed speaker(s). In light of the enriched conception of semantic context, the required rules are naturally formulated.

(R) The referent of “‘N’” in the formula “‘N’” is P = the thing to which the echoed speaker refers in uttering a token of ‘N’ = the thing to which the echoed speaker refers in producing a token that same-tokening this. N.

(E) The extension of “‘P’” in the formula ‘N is “P”’ = {x: x has a property, which the echoed speaker expressed by ‘P’} = {x: x has a property, which the echoed speaker expressed by same-tokening this. P.}
Just like (CI) and (CY), (R) and (E) state the descriptive meaning of twice quotes that is relevant only with respect to the context of use, but irrelevant to determining the referent with respect to a circumstance of evaluation. In other words, twice quotes have a non-stable character that assigns to them different contents in different contexts of use. For example, according to (R), (10) expresses, in the context it was uttered, the proposition that McPherson is not that smart. Yet, understanding (10) is not to know of (10) that it expresses this proposition in the specified context. Rather it comes down to knowing how the content of (10) is determined in a given context of use.

A lack of knowledge about the context may cause one to mistake the content of a given utterance, but the character of the expression uttered is determined by rules of the language, hence the character of (10) is known by competent speakers of English. If I am right, Kaplan is wrong in saying, ‘a formula has a Stable Character iff it contains no essential occurrence of a demonstrative’ (Kaplan, 1989, p. 548). A formula has a non-stable character in other cases too, e.g. if it contains twice quotes. (In fairness to Kaplan, I should add that he might claim that I have just discovered another kind of demonstrative, namely—twice quotes).

Here, then, is the basic difference between my account and Recanati’s. According to Recanati, to understand a sentence like (10) is, in fact, to understand a sentence in a nonstandard idiolect of English. If the hearer is not acquainted with the echoed speaker’s idiolect (Alice’s) he cannot understand Bob’s statement that ‘Einstein’ is not that smart. According to my account, (10) is an ordinary English sentence. Any English speaker can understand it. After all, the character of twice quotes is part of the rules of the language. Bob (the speaker of (10)) claims that this person—to whom the echoed speaker refers by ‘Einstein’—is not that smart. (Note, “‘Einstein’” is a rigid designator.) In the same spirit, an English speaker understands the sentence ‘I went to visit my aunt’, whether or not he knows the content expressed by any particular utterance of this sentence. In both cases the hearer might be confused with respect to the context of use. Still, he understands the sentences by virtue of knowing the English lexicon and the character of the phrases that appear in these sentences.

According to Recanati, a unified theory of quotation would abandon the demonstrative theory elaborated by Davidson, and later by Cappelen and Lepore. I have shown that there is an account of open quotation, which is a natural extension of the demonstrative theory of quotation. In the next subsection I shall show that this approach has obvious advantages.

5.3. Solving the Puzzles
(A) The first advantage of my theory is immediately visible: it elegantly addresses the grammatical problem posed by (13). The question was, it should be recalled, why (13) is a grammatical English sentence while its disquoted version ((13–d)) is not. After all, the nonword ‘philosopher’ occurs in both. To understand the difference, note again that “‘philosopher’” is a composite phrase. As such, its
meaning is a function of the meaning of its components. Now, my point is that unlike the majority of the semantic rules, (E) does not appeal at all to the English lexicon or to the theory of meaning for English, which interprets this lexicon with the help of the principle of disquotation. The semantic meaning of the twice-quoted material (note: the twice-quoted material is ‘philosopher’) is completely irrelevant. Instead, in fixing the referent of “‘philosopher’”, (E) appeals only to the echoed speaker’s meaning in uttering a certain token of ‘philosopher’. Thus, “‘philosopher’” (and “‘smart’”) express an intentionally specified property. Put differently, since the contextual element of meaning is determined by the meaning of the echoed speaker, the twice-quoted material does not have to be part of any lexicon.

(B) The second challenge (which both theories Recanati’s as well as Cappelen and Lepore’s fail to address) is explaining the grammaticality of:

(14) Alice said that Nicola is a ‘philosopher’.

It turns out that the above analysis of open quotation paves the way for an attractive treatment of (14). I suggest that (14)’s logical form is this:

\[ (\text{LF}^*{-14}) \text{ There is an utterance, } u, \text{ such that Alice utters } u, \text{ and } u \text{ same-says that. Nicola is a ‘philosopher’}. \]

(14)’s complement clause is a perfectly grammatical sentence: the demonstrated item in (LF*{-14}) is ‘Nicola is a “philosopher”’ (namely: (13)) whose grammaticality has just been explained, and its meaning displayed. So I claim, pace Cappelen and Lepore, that (14) is not a case of mixed quotation; it does not combine direct and indirect report. Hence, (14) does not imply the ungrammatical (14–d), or any other disquoted report.

Note, however, that there is an important difference between (13) above and (13) as (14)’s complement clause. When (13) stands on its own, the echoed speaker is unspecified, while when it is a complement clause in an indirect report, the echoed speaker is, usually, the speaker of the reported speech act (to whom I shall refer as ‘the primary speaker’). In our case the linguistic intentions to which (E) appeals in determining the extension of “‘philosopher’” are, most naturally, Alice’s. Hereafter, I shall refer to indirect reports whose complement clauses are open quotations as cases of ‘using others’ words’.

It should be noted that the practice of using others’ words cannot replace the practice of mixed quotations. This is because a speaker who uses others’ words actively does not want to be committed to any disquoted report. Such a speaker has, then, a special reason to use phrases whose extension is determined by the

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9 There is a complication here, which I discuss in the very last paragraph of this article.

10 This is a modification of my analysis of cases like (14) in Benbaji, 2004, sect. 2.
primary speaker’s meaning. But we regularly can, and (hence) often want to combine direct and indirect reports, and this practice should be understood in accordance with Cappelen and Lepore’s original theory of mixed quotation.

It might be objected that positing such an ambiguity is a blatant violation of Grice’s ‘modified Occam’s razor’. The objection is as follows. Consider the sentence

(15) John says that my brother is ‘smart’.

According to my account, this sentence can be read either as (a) a mixed quotation, or (b) as a case of using others’ words. In the (b) reading, the speaker reports an utterance of John’s to the effect that the speaker’s brother is smart, while ostensively echoing John’s use of ‘smart’ and thereby implicitly ascribing that use to John. This is the phenomenon described by Recanati: open quotation in the complement of an ascription. According to both readings, the speaker delivers the content of John’s speech while specifying the word he used to characterize the speaker’s brother. The only difference is supposed to be the following. In (b) the speaker implicitly ascribes to John the use of the word ‘smart’ (by using it in an ostensively echoic manner), while in (a) this ascription is taken to be part of the semantic content of the report (analyzed in the manner of Cappelen and Lepore). But Recanati insists that, in (b), the implicit ascription is incorporated into the report’s truth-conditional content via the mechanism of free enrichment. So it seems very uneconomical to posit a second reading, given the availability of a pragmatic analysis.

I have three comments to make in relation to this objection. First, there are cases in which the (a) reading is incompatible with the (b) reading. Consider an indirect report whose embedded clause is:

Alice said that ‘Einstein’ is very smart.

The (a) reading is that Alice said that Einstein is very smart, and that she uttered ‘Einstein’. The (b) reading is that McPherson (to whom Alice refers by the word ‘Einstein’) is very smart. Secondly, Recanati’s notion of intuitive content plays no role in my account. If I am correct, according to the (b) reading the speaker of (15) implicitly presupposes that John used the word ‘smart’. Yet, this presupposition is not at all part of what (15) says. Indeed, and this is my third point, the mechanism of free enrichment is, at best, controversial. For example, it might blur the distinction between ‘There is only one king of France and he is bald’, to ‘The king of France is bald’, which was so important to Strawson. Arguably, in cases like (14)—where the (a) reading is ruled out and the (b) reading is the only possibility—if the echoed speaker didn’t utter the nonword ‘philtosopher,’ the sentence has no truth-value.

(C) This point is related to the last challenge I have to address. It has to do with the fact that (14) implies (14’).
(14') Alice uttered, ‘philosopher’.

In Cappelen and Lepore’s view (14) is another case of mixed quotation, hence, according to them, (14) implies (14') by the conjunction rule. Since I refuse to so categorize (14), their plausible explanation of the alleged implication is not an option for me. In Recanati’s view, by contrast, the implication is explained through a complex pragmatic story about the conditions of use of quotation marks. Recanati does not realize that (14') is a presumption to which Bob (the reporter of (14)) is committed in virtue of attempting to make a meaningful statement. If I am correct in this, the alleged implication should be explained within the semantics of twice quotes, rather than by reference to any complex pragmatic story about their use.

My account provides the needed explanation: in cases like (14), where the echoed speaker is the primary speaker, Bob, the reporter, must presuppose that Alice uttered ‘philosopher’. For otherwise, (E) would be inapplicable and thereby (14) would not make any sense. The difference between my explanation and Recanati’s is analogous to the difference between the logical status of the sentences ‘I am here now’ and ‘There is a language’ within Kaplan’s logic. The former, but not the latter, is true in every semantic context of use. Hence, the former, but not the latter, turns out to be a logical truth. (Notwithstanding its status within Kaplan’s framework, the sentence ‘there is a language’ is true in every real context of use). Similarly, in my view, the conditional,

(14'') If Alice said that Nicola is a ‘philosopher’, Alice uttered, ‘philosopher’.

is true in every (properly enriched) semantic context of use; that is, (14'') is a logical truth, in Kaplan’s sense. In contrast, within Recanati’s framework, where the pattern which (14'') exhibits can be captured only through the regularity of the non-semantic aspects of the situation of utterance,¹¹ this is not so.

(D) A final remark: does my version of the demonstrative theory respect the Davidsonian motif? Do quotation marks have the same meaning in every context in which they occur? No! In my view, the role of quotation marks varies. Within some linguistic context their semantic value is a component of the proposition expressed by the sentence, while within others, they are part of the mechanism that determines which proposition is expressed in a given context of use. This, however, is not a disadvantage, since ambiguity is part of the data. Suppose that Alice said,

(18) ‘Londres’ is pretty.

¹¹ See again Recanati 2000, pp. 292–95; Recanati identifies the semantic context and the pragmatic context—and thus would reject my suggestion.
And suppose Bob reports,

(19) Alice said that ‘Londres’ is pretty

(18) can be read as a pure or open quotation, since it says, according to the former reading, that the word ‘Londres’ is pretty; according to the second, it is a statement about whatever is called ‘Londres’ in the echoed speaker idiolect. Accordingly, (19) has (at least) three readings: it might be read as an indirect report of Alice’s claim about the word ‘Londres’. Alternatively, it might be read as an indirect report in which the complement of the ascription is an open quotation. But then, the echoed speaker might be the speaker echoed by Alice, or alternatively (and more naturally), Alice herself. The apparent advantage of my version of the demonstrative theory is that it points out the common ground: although functioning differently in different linguistic contexts, in every sentence in which they appear, the semantic role of the quotation marks involves a demonstration by the predicate ‘same-tokens that’.

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References


12 The basic ambiguity of quotation marks is exemplified by the two readings of (18) and by the first two readings of (19). On the other hand, (19)’s second and third readings exemplify a completely different phenomenon, that Recanati accurately calls ‘semantic underdetermination’ (Recanati, 2002, sect. 3). Semantic underdetermination follows from the fact that the semantic rule (E) does not specify the echoed speaker. Compare these last readings of (19) to the various possible readings of the sentence ‘you are here now’.