CRYPTIC NOTE II AND WAGS III

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The two surviving notes of this series (see footnote 1 for the fate of the lost first note of the series and footnote 2 for the reason for the change in the title of the series) were written in late 1968 or early 1969. Their author attempted to circulate them by placing copies of them in my mailbox, in the belief that they would then automatically become part of an oral tradition. This attempt was successful in the case of Cryptic Note II [see McCawley (1973b) for one of many places where I repeat Morgan's arguments about again], *though, appropriately enough for a paper about* know *and* forget, *I appear to have forgotten the contents of WAGS III, and indeed its very existence, within hours of reading it. While WAGS III has thus had no influence on linguistics (and its contents have not entered into linguistic folklore the way those of Cryptic Note II have), it is included here as one of the more interesting contributions to the controversy about lexical decomposition.*

CRYPTIC NOTE II:[1] *Again, and then again...*

Again, like *almost* (see footnotes to McCawley, 1968c), seems to be a test for, and evidence of, predicates internal to lexical items. The meaning of *again* seems to be very roughly:

again(S) = $\overset{?}{\text{(and)}}$I(assert, or more likely, presuppose)

that S occurred/was true before.

That *again* may be predicated of predicates internal to the word is apparent from sentences like the following:

John came home at 3 and left again at 5.

When Harry finished his first sentence, another judge jailed him again.

Notice that these sentences are ambiguous in respect to *again*. The first can mean either that John left for a second time or merely that John came to be away again, with *again* predicated only of *be away/gone/...* . Similarly, the second can mean either that another judge jailed Harry for a second time, having jailed him once before, or that another judge has caused it to be the case that Harry is in jail again. But this ambiguity can be resolved by context. For example,

The old man, who had died a peaceful death, came back to life 300 years later as a vampire, but somebody killed him again.

The workers managed to open a hole through the rock, but a cave-in closed it again.

CAVEAT: The *again* test seems wholesome at this point, but more futzing about with it needs to be done before it can be considered entirely trustworthy.
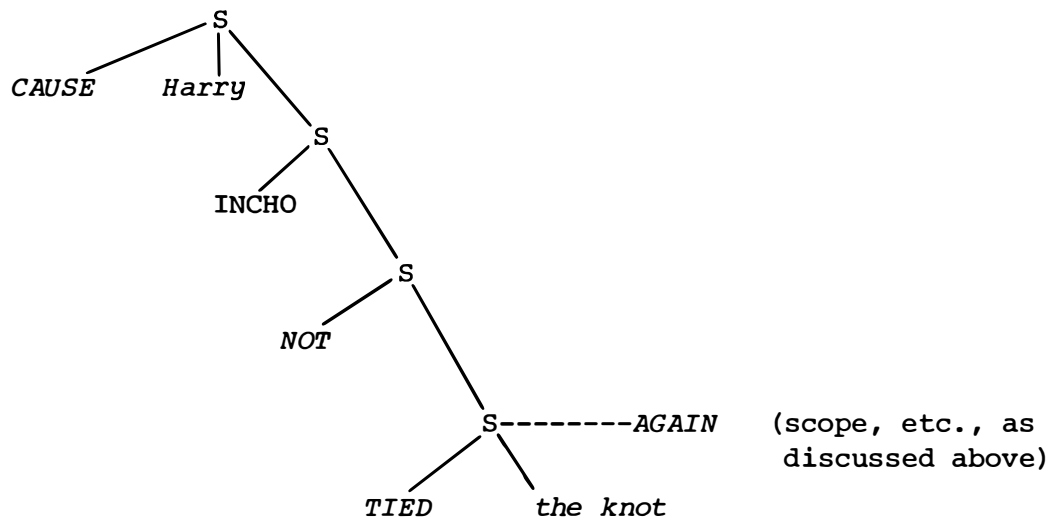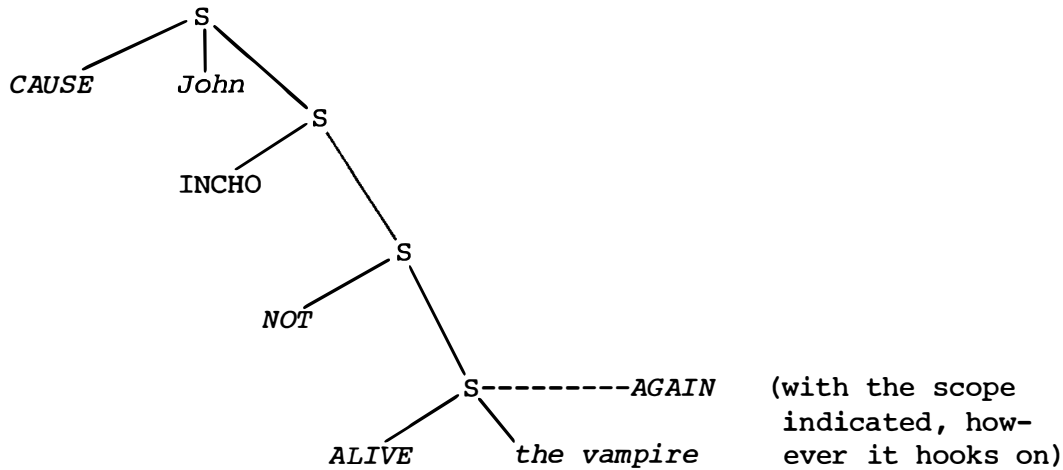
N.B. The raising of *again*, like *almost*, cannot take place over a *not*, probably not over a quantifier at all; cf. *John almost killed Harry*, which does not have the reading *John caused Harry to become not almost alive*. Thus,

John killed the vampire again.

Harry untied the knot again.

cannot come from, respectively,

```
              S
           /  |  \
          /   |   \
   CAUSE   John    \
                    S
                  / | \
           INCHO    |  \
                    |   \
                    |    S
                   /|     \
              NOT   |      \
                    |       \
                    |        \
                    S---------AGAIN      (with the scope
                  /   \                   indicated, how-
             ALIVE    the vampire         ever it hooks on)
```

```
              S
           /  |  \
          /   |   \
   CAUSE   Harry   \
                    S
                  / | \
           INCHO    |  \
                    |   \
                    |    S
                   /|     \
              NOT   |      \
                    |       \
                    |        \
                    S--------AGAIN       (scope, etc., as
                  /   \                   discussed above)
              TIED    the knot
```

OTHER MESSIES: There are some discrepancies in relation to
lexical items with covarying indices (cf. *All those men
committed patricide/suicide/...*).   For example,

> *The old man, who had died a peaceful death, came
>   back to life 300 years later as a lexicalist,
>   but*

> { *somebody killed him again*
>   *he killed himself again*
>   **he committed suicide again*
>   **his children committed patricide again*
>   **his only brother committed fratricide again*

These probably can be solved by a close look at the indices in deep structure, but I haven't done it yet. Note also the following, whose solution is not obvious:

When Mary broke her doll the first time, her father
        { *put it together again.*
        { **fixed it again.*

NOTES

[1]"Cryptic Note I" contained the ultimate solution to the problems of pronominalization, reference, and identity, as well as an item of overwhelming and irrefutable empirical evidence against the lexicalist position. Unfortunately, it was handwritten on a package of Purina Hog Chow, and was eaten by a hungry Chicago policeman who tore it from me during a tear-gas attack on three jaywalkers, thereby being lost to mankind.

WAGS III[2]

Consider the meaning of *know*. What does it mean to *know* something, not in terms of possibilities of occurrence of *know* in English, but on a more nearly philosophical or psychological level? In other words, what is it that I am doing or being when I know something? I would like to claim that whatever it is, it includes at least the following:

When I *know* x,

(a) INFO--I have stored in my mind information somehow pertinent to x [N.B.: this is true, I would claim, but insufficient. A characterization of the status (place?) of the information and my attitude toward it must be included to account for the difference between *believe/think/suppose/guess/...* and *know;* in other words, something to characterize presupposition]. But having information pertinent to x stored in my mind is not a sufficient condition for *knowing*. It must also be the case that

(b) ACCESS--I can access (in the IBM sense of the word) the pertinent information.

I emphasize that I am not merely engaging in the habit so dear to humanists of using sloppy metaphors to speculate about things one knows nothing about in order to avoid the commitment of making substantive claims. Rather, I am claiming that what is represented in (a) and (b) is really crucially involved in knowing, and that the only sloppy areas are in the precision with which the two factors are stated and possible errors in detail. I am making substantive claims. Moreover, I am about to claim that (a) and (b) are crucial factors (that is not to say the only factors, or even the only crucial factors) in the semantic representation of the English word *know*.

Consider the possibility that *know* can't be analyzed into INFO + ACCESS; i.e., that for a given x, at all times you either know x or you don't. This is untenable, since the following dialogue seems a quite felicitous use of *know:*

A. *Do you know what 365 + 9,867,540 is?*

B. *Sure. Just a second while I add it up.*

As further evidence that accessibility is crucially involved in *know,* consider utterances like:

> *What is your name? I know what it is, don't tell*
> *me, I know it, I know it ... no, I've forgotten*
> *it after all.*

In this utterance, the speaker is saying, "I have the information and can access it, I can access it... no, the information is there, but I can't access it after all".

Now, what are the syntactosemantic correlates of this representation of *know*? De Rijk, in his beautiful paper on predicate raising (de Rijk, 1974), shows that the semantic representation of *forget* appears to be identical to *cease to know,* as evidenced by a wide range of syntactic properties that *know* and *forget* have in common:[3]

1. The selectional restrictions of *forget* are exactly those of *know:*

   a. animate subjects, and the same semantic/pragmatic anomalies within the realm of animate subjects:[4]

   (1)   *My brother/*table knows where I am.*

   (2)   *My brother/*table has forgotten where I am.*

   (3)   *The chicken/*My brother knows how to lay an egg.*

   (4)   *The chicken/*My brother has forgotten how to*
              lay an egg.

   (5)   *The chicken/*My brother has ceased to know how*
              to lay an egg.

   b. Both *forget* and *know* take as objects *that*-clauses, WH-clauses, and simple NPs--when simple NPs, they are, in the same manner for both *know* and *forget,* sometimes derived from WH-clauses; i.e., (6) is to (7) exactly as (8) is to (9):

   (6)   *I know your name.*

   (7)   *I know what your name is.*

   (8)   *I have forgotten your name.*

   (9)   *I have forgotten what your name is.*

2. Both admit the same range of possible interpretations with a simple NP object (see de Rijk's paper for details).

3. Factivity of complement:

(10)   *Ed knows Pasternak wrote "Doctor Zhivago",
        but crazy Charley {doesn't know/has
        forgotten} that Shakespeare wrote it.

(11)   *I have forgotten that today is my birthday.

(11a)   *I $\begin{Bmatrix} don't\ know \\ have\ ceased\ to\ know \\ don't\ know\ any\ more \end{Bmatrix}$ that today is my
        birthday.

(12)   I $\begin{Bmatrix} have\ forgotten \\ don't\ know \\ have\ ceased\ to\ know \\ don't\ know\ any\ more \end{Bmatrix}$ whether today is my
        birthday.

(13)   *Bill knows that he $\begin{Bmatrix} has\ forgotten \\ doesn't\ know \\ has\ ceased\ to\ know \\ doesn't\ know\ any\ more \end{Bmatrix}$
        that today is his birthday.

and so on. This leads him naturally to the tentative
hypothesis that *forget* is actually derived from

$$(BECOME(NOT(KNOW)))$$

(which also underlies *cease to know*) in a straightforward
manner by the independently motivated rule of predicate
raising, as set forth by McCawley. This is natural, plausible,
and seemingly well motivated, since *cease to know* is in fact
a paraphrase of *forget; cf.*

(14)   *Grace has ceased to know how to make won ton
        soup, but she still knows how to play the
        piano.*

(15)   *Grace has forgotten how to make won ton soup,
        but she still knows how to play the piano.*

However, as de Rijk points out, there is a fly in the won ton
soup. There are cases where *forget* is not a paraphrase of
cease to know (pp. 66,67):

  Suppose my friends have all gone off to Australia; then I
  can say (67a), but not (67b)

  (67a)   *I have ceased to know where to look for help.*

  (67b)   *I have forgotten where to look for help.*

[Similarly] If my son is not very constant in his appreciation
  of movie stars, we can appreciate the difference between:

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(72a) *I have ceased to know who my son's favorite movie star is.*

and

(72b) *I have forgotten who my son's favorite movie star is.*

Faced with this baffling difference in meaning between *forget* and *cease to know,* de Rijk states (p. 70):

> Our observation about the difference between *'cease to know'* and *'forget'* can now be stated as follows: *'forget'*-sentences contain additional information over and above that furnished by the corresponding *'cease to know'*-sentences, in that the lexical item *'forget'* has built into it a constancy of reference to a past state which may or may not continue into the present. That is, if an object of knowledge is subject to change in time, the use of *'forget'* requires that the previous knowledge and the present lack of it, are both about the same temporal slice of the object. The syntactic construction *'cease to know'* has no such property, and is therefore appropriate to describe some situations where *'forget'*-sentences cannot be used.

I would like to suggest that this difference in readings is accounted for correctly by the semantic representation I proposed for *forget,* in the following way:

cease to know is structurally ambiguous; *cease* can have in its scope INFO (meaning either "I no longer have information pertinent to x" or "the information I have is no longer pertinent to x", or perhaps both of these are possible, adding another ambiguity) or ACCESS, or both. In (67a) and (72a) the scope of *cease* is INFO, and, either formally or by implication (you can't access information you don't have), ACCESS. But it is logically possible, if both these factors are internal to *know,* for the scope of *cease* to be only ACCESS. And as a matter of fact, I propose that just this reading is involved in the semantic representation of *forget*-- namely, something roughly paraphraseable as "I previously had in my mind information pertinent to x and had access to that information, but I no longer can access it".

In terms of a sloppy metaphor, I've lost the location of a file. Note that this phenomenon is the same "ambiguity of scope" found elsewhere in the structural representation of meaning and syntax.

An interesting question is whether the speaker, in using

forget, means that he no longer has the information at all. It seems to me that he probably does not mean this--rather, he means only that he "can't find it"--but this point is not entirely clear. Possible tests for this may be found in investigating questions like: If speech skills are centered in a certain area of the brain, and if a person loses that part of his brain, say through being shot in the head, can one properly say that that person has *forgotten* how to speak? Probably not, but this area is a bit fuzzy, and there are quite possibly dialectal (read: idiolectal) variations.

Conclusion

If my analysis of *know* and *forget* is correct, then de Rijk's paper, which seemed to present serious counter-evidence to generative semantics, actually provides evidence that the constructs of the theory must be a good deal more abstract than previously supposed. I also note with hesitant (but hopeful) satisfaction that the abstract terms of the theory seem close to those of a theory of mental behavior. And I cannot resist pointing out that if my analysis is correct, then people have known for a long time what psychologists have only recently discovered, namely, that just because you have forgotten something, it isn't necessarily no longer in your head. Perhaps if psychologists wish to study how the human mind works, they should consider asking the experts.

NOTES

[2] The title of this semiperiodical is herewith changed from "Cryptic Notes" to "WAGS" (Wild-Ass Guesses), in accordance with the contents of the present number.

[3] He does not consider certain senses of *forget,* as in *I forgot my wallet*. I have likewise ignored them.

[4] I use * somewhat inconsistently to mark both ungrammaticality and logical and pragmatic anomaly. De Rijk's employment of shrieks (!, !!) is probably a better device.