

## THE PRAGMATICS OF SEMANTICAL THEORIES

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Any theory of meaning defines the *nature* of meaning and at the same time states the set of *regularities* formally governing the process of signifying. The *extensional* theory of meaning claims that the meaning of an expression is the object, fact, state of affairs or event to which the expression refers; even when the object, fact, state of affairs or event are not actual, they can be seen as the item to which the expression refers — though in this case, they have a more complex and less homogeneous ontology: that of possible and not just actual items. The *intensional* theory holds that the meaning of an expression is that part of our mental content that stands for the expression; these contents can be regarded as necessary correlates of linguistic fragments, e.g., as ‘propositional’ contents. An *intentional-behavioural* theory analyses meaning in terms of what people *do* upon producing and upon hearing linguistic expressions; in this case, meaning is seen as a productive and receptive process or as an intentional action. Although these three types are not so mutually exclusive or incompatible as to exclude intermediate types and although this rough classification needs more refinement so that subtypes can be distinguished, these labels nevertheless prove useful. These paradigms I call: the theory of meaning as a T(ruth)-theory, the theory of meaning as an M(eanings)-theory, and the theory of meaning as a C(onvention)-theory. A look at some representative and influential proposals made in recent years reveals that a typology along these lines should not be impossible. Prototypes of these three paradigms are Davidson’s extensional semantics, Dummett’s version of the Fregean intensional semantics, and Grice’s intentional semantics.

I do not intend in this paper to evaluate these theories of meaning (see Evans and McDowell, 1976; Parret and Bouverresse, 1981) nor to present my own views on meaning, truth and language. It is not the relevance of the three paradigms that is important to me here, but their *epistemological structure*. One particular aspect of this structure will be discussed : the *pragmatic constraints* on these theories of meaning, governing both the specificity of the theory and the global coherence of its statements. Although sometimes these constraints are explicitly stated, for the most part they remain implicit. The purpose of my paper is thus twofold. Firstly, I will try to render explicit the pragmatical constraints governing the three prototypes by abstracting from the prototypes those aspects that concern their pragmatical constraints or that indicate implicitly their pragmatical orientation. These elements will be set within a broader frame of theoretical options and attitudes (for an identical procedure, see Van Fraassen, 1977). Secondly, I will argue that the dominance of pragmatic constraints on theories of meaning cannot be evaded, and, moreover, that the connections between the paradigms of theories of meaning and the types of pragmatical constraints are systematic and deducible.

## 1. *The epistemological paradigms of contemporary theories of meaning*

### 1.1. *The theory of meaning as a T-theory*

#### 1.1.1. *Truth and its empirical-psychological constraint*

Let me recall Davidson's central points and, especially, the discrepancy between the *initial thesis* in *Truth and Meaning* (Davidson, 1967) and papers following it (Davidson, 1970, 1971), and the *revised thesis* in his more recent publications (Davidson, 1973a, 1973b, 1974) (see Foster, 1976). Initially, the aim was to reconstruct the concept of meaning from the concept of truth alone. Davidson supposes that it should be possible to derive from a finitely stated set of axioms, for every sentence S of the language L, a theorem of the form : x is 'true if and only if' p, where x is replaced by a structural description of S, and p by a sentence of the meta-language which translates S. A T-sentence is meaning-giving provided that two conditions hold : (1) the T-sentence has to be true, and (2) the T-sentence has to be a theorem of a finitely axiomatised theory that entails a true T-sentence for every sentence of an infinite

language (upon the fact of discerning *structure* in those sentences). What is important in the initial thesis is not so much the incorporation of Tarski's Convention T, which states a material adequacy condition for a definition of truth for an object language L recursively. According to Davidson, even granted that to give the truth conditions is to give the meaning, a true T-sentence (a sentence of the form 'x is true if and only if' obtained by the indicated replacements) does not *in itself* give the meaning of the object language sentence with which it deals. Rather, the more original point of Davidson's initial thesis is that the T-sentence *has to be entailed by a theory* that entails a true T-sentence for every object language sentence with which the truth theory is concerned. There is a clear and advantageous shift away from Tarski: a theory of meaning *presupposes* here a *T-theory*, which means that, for each sentence of the object language, the theory of truth entails a theorem in which the sentence is *structurally* designated and used in its natural language translation. In technical terms, the meaning theory as a T-theory is a *holistic* truth theory *for natural languages*; the theory purports to interpret each sentence by locating its position within the truth determination for the *natural language as a whole*, by stating its truth conditions in the framework of the general principles through which the truth conditions of *any* sentence are determined *by its structure*. So far, natural languages are indeed treated as purely *extensional*, with the restriction that extensionality has to be defined here *holistically* (and not atomistically).

The *revised* thesis employs 'psychological' concepts. It is important to see that there is, from here on, an epistemological equilibrium between two components: *meaning as truth*, holistically defined, on the one hand, and *belief* as an attitude towards the sentence, on the other, neither component being reducible to the other. According to the revised thesis, further conditions must be satisfied by the theory even when Convention T and the T-theoretical view on meaning are fulfilled: namely, that the theory must be supported *by evidence* relating to the conditions under which speakers of the object language *hold* sentences of it *to be true*. This evidence has to be sufficient to justify the claim that p replacements translate the sentences designated by the x replacements. Here we have, I think, a most interesting and relevant condition, explaining the flexibility and creativity of meaningful language use as well as the difficulty of adequate theoretical treatment. The construction of a theory of meaning requires the *simultaneous* fixing of meanings and beliefs, but to describe meanings and beliefs

can be seen to be an impossible task. Nevertheless, even without knowing what a person P believes about the world, and even without knowing what a sentence S means T-theoretically, we can find it plausible that *P holds S to be true*. The strategy of working out a theory of meaning then develops logically in three stages. (1) Firstly, we amass guesses about the conditions under which people hold sentences to be true. (2) Secondly, we construct a theory which enables us to derive truth conditions for sentences on the basis of their structural descriptions, *in such a way* that the conditions under which sentences *are* true, according to the theory, relate to the conditions under which people *hold* them to be true. (3) Finally, the adoption of the T-theory and its derived sentences, together with the guesses as to which sentences people hold true (and these guesses, surely, will be continuously revised), will determine our view of their *beliefs* about the world.

Thus, Davidson correctly urges abandoning the thesis that truth in a theory of truth is sufficiently for it to constitute a theory of meaning. The reasons for this inadequacy are twofold: first of all, one needs the *correlation* between the conditions under which sentences have to be true and the conditions under which sentences are held to be true; secondly, the T-theory has to be stated in such a way that it correlates with a system of beliefs for which the making of intelligible ascriptions is limited by general *psychological principles*. It has been argued that the revised thesis is a regression in that meaning no longer depends on objects, facts, states of affairs and events in a purely extensional manner. Indeed, it reveals the important fact that, within an adequate theory of meaning, objects, facts, states of affairs and events are items which have to be regarded as *believed* by the language user, and not only as *known* by the language theorist. Once one states the identification of the theory of meaning with the T-theory, one has to admit at the same time that the T-theory is dominated by a constraint which I call, along the lines suggested by Davidson, the 'empirical-psychological constraint'. This constraint requires the *maximising of agreement* between the truth claims of the speakers and the truth claims of the T-theory — the better the theory, the more it represents the speakers as correct in what they hold true. Apart from this, the 'empirical-psychological constraint' says also that the beliefs ascribable to speakers on the basis of the T-theory have to be supported by *independent psychological evidence*, i.e., by general psychological principles.

### 1.1.2. *The socialisation of extensions*

It may still be the case that Davidson wants to achieve an understanding of meaning by assuming a prior grasp of the concept of truth, and that, therefore, the *acceptability* of T-sentences need not presuppose meanings, intensions or translations. Nevertheless, *acceptable* T-sentences will yield *interpretations*. The problem is to state the constraint in such a way that it is strong enough to guarantee the *interpretation* of sentences. This constraint is nothing more than the *evidential* base that consists of facts about conditions under which speakers hold sentences of their language to be true. For the philosopher of language, acceptance of this evidential base amounts to *maximising the self-consistency* attributed to the speaker; this self-consistency of the speakers consists of his *general desire* for the correlation of the sentence held to be true and the T-sentence itself.

How can extensions be socialised? Semantics becomes socio-semantics not by virtue of the universality of the T-sentences, but on the grounds that the theory of meaning as a T-theory is constrained by the *psychologically evidential base*: the *empirical* aspect of the constraint concerns the maximising of agreement between the T-claims of the speaker and the truth claims of the T-theory; the *psychological* aspect of the constraint concerns the maximising of the self-consistency of the speaker. In fact, the T-theory emerges in the context of the interpretation of language fragments. The language user must be a member of a speech community because he is an *interpreter*, and because membership of a language community depends on the ability to interpret the utterances of language users. Interpretation here cannot be seen as the recognition of linguistic *conventions* or linguistic rules — this is why Davidson's view can never lead to an intentional or actional semantics. There cannot be interpretation except by *maximizing agreement* with respect to the correlation between holding the sentence to be true and the truth of the sentence, and by maximising the selfconsistency of the speakers. The T-theory itself, stating the truth of the sentence upon the language as a whole, indeed combines with a theory of interpretation dominated by an aprioristic pragmatic constraint, often called by Davidson himself the *Principle of Charity*.

Charity is the foundation of the psychologically evidential base that orients the meaning of the expression. Charity is not an option but "a condition of having a workable theory; it is meaningless to suggest that we might fall into massive error by endorsing

it" (Davidson, 1973a, 20). Davidson on many occasions invokes the *epistemological* necessity of charity : "Charity is forced on us : if we can produce a theory that reconciles charity and the formal conditions for a theory, we have done all that could be done to ensure communication. Nothing more is possible, and nothing more is needed"; "In our need to make men make sense, we will try for a theory that finds him *consistent*, a believer of truths, and a lover of the good" (Davidson, 1971). Given the methodology of interpretation, we still would not be in a position to judge that others had beliefs radically different from our own. There must be a *neutral ground*, a common coordinate system. This is why one can say that truth of sentences, even when it remains relative to language, is an *objective* as can be (1973a, 20). Thus, this charitable assumption about human intelligence and self-consistency is an *epistemological* device — it is a necessary assumption, if, given a satisfactory theory, we need to come up with an interpretation of each sentence when we know only the conditions under which speakers hold sentences true.

The methodology of Davidson's proposal should not be misunderstood. At the center of the theory of meaning stands the *T-theory*; I have already said that a *T-sentence* alone does not give the meaning of the natural language sentence it concerns — it is the totality of the *T-sentences* that should optimally fit evidence about sentences held true by speakers. 'Radical interpretation', however, involves interdependence of meaning *and belief*, as well as *understanding* of the correlation between the conditions under which utterances of sentences are true and the conditions under which utterances of sentences are held to be true. But what exactly is meant by interdependence of meaning and belief, and by understanding, in an extensional semantics ?

### 1.1.3. *Belief and understanding in an extensional semantics*

One way of expressing the interdependence of meaning and belief would be to say that a speaker holds a sentence to be true, on the one hand, because of what the sentence *means* (the meanings of the sentence), and also because of what he *believes* (the beliefs of the speaker). But this is not the means that Davidson (1974) employs. The theory of meaning as a *T-theory* need not incorporate the *meanings* of the sentence and the *beliefs* of the speaker, which are condemned as 'intensional entities'. This is precisely why, according to Davidson, a theory of meaning is not an *overall* theory

of linguistic behaviour. The important factor is the interdependence of meanings and beliefs, and this interdependence is realised by the *attitude of holding a sentence true*. This attitude, of course, is a belief too, but not one like the other 'substantial' beliefs; the belief that sentences are true is not a variable entity, and no distinction within it can be discriminated. It is a *single* attitude applicable to *all* sentences (Davidson, 1973b, 322), and this single belief is the only one to which a theory of meaning appeals; the very general attitude of holding sentences to be true (or of 'believing' sentences to be true) is thus the *vector* of two forces, as Davidson says (1973a, 18), or of two sets of variable entities, namely the meanings of the sentence and the beliefs of the speaker.

A workable theory of meanings and an acceptable theory of beliefs within a general theory of (linguistic) behaviour can be abstracted only *a posteriori* from the fact that sentences are held to be true. This evidently does not mean that one has to be insensible to the general theory of behaviour; it is rather easy to accept that the interpretation of language fragments can go hand in hand with the interpretation of *action* in general, and so with the attribution of desires and beliefs to the speaker. However, the philosopher of language aiming at the construction of a theory of linguistic meaning would be on the wrong track if he deals directly with meanings and beliefs as classes of variable entities (see for example Davidson, 1974, 311–312). The chief thesis of a main article by Davidson (1975) is that a creature cannot have *thoughts* unless it is an interpreter of the speech of another — and the same can be said of meanings and beliefs. Desires and beliefs, and the rationality of their fitting together, never have explanatory priority, although they are both essential to the explanation of behaviour (even of linguistic behaviour). Thus, the psychologically evidential base for the theory is the attitude of holding true or *accepting as true*. The originality of the thesis here lies in the fact that, in the theory of language, the idea of a 'super-belief' stands ready to fill the gap between objective truth and what is held true. Belief, in this case, can no longer be seen as a *private* psychological content — it is not intelligible except "as an adjustment to the public norm of language" (Davidson, 1975, 22). A creature must be a member of a speech community if it is to have this 'super-belief'. There is indeed a prior and global *understanding of the language*: to understand the language (or to interpret 'radically' linguistic expressions) presupposes understanding of what it is to use *any* language, and this understanding is based on acceptance of the constraint of Charity. Thus, radical interpretation

is *charitable* interpretation, and it will become clear later on that the super-belief that sentences ought to be true is the overall *pragmatic* constraint on Davidson's extensional theory of meaning.

## 1.2. *The theory of meaning as an M-theory*

### 1.2.1. *Propositional knowledge and its conceptual constraint*

Dummett's return to Frege is ambiguous; he uses Fregean concepts to restore richness to the theory of meaning, yet at the same time arguing against Frege's view that the notion of truth is the central notion of the theory of meaning. Once the Fregean concepts are restored, Dummett reformulates their hierarchy. Restoration as well as restructuring are directed against extensional semantics (like Davidson's), regarded by Dummett as impoverishing and narrowing the initial Fregean position. Let me comment briefly on the restoration of the Fregean doctrine in order to offer a better grasp of the essence of the position stated in intensional semantics.

Frege made distinctions on the one hand between *sense and reference*, and on the other between *sense and force* (see Dummett, 1976, 74 and 127). A theory of meaning that, as Frege's, takes the notion of truth as central, consists of both an essential and a supplementary part. The core of the theory will be a *theory of reference* specifying the truth conditions of the sentences. The shell surrounding the theory of reference forms the *theory of sense* specifying the *knowledge* the speaker possesses of the theorems of the theory of reference. This is the essential part of the theory of meaning. The supplementary part is the *theory of force* giving account of the conventional significance which the utterance of the sentence may convey. Dummett's criticism of Davidson rests on the statement that, although Davidson's theory of meaning takes the notion of truth as its core notion, he reduces the 'shell theory' and the supplementary theory: in Dummett's view, he abstracts sense and force from the Fregean construction. Yet, Frege's theory itself is also criticised, in that Dummett does not admit the concept of truth as the correct choice for the central notion of the theory of meaning.

Dummett frequently uses Frege's well-known double argument for the *sense-reference* distinction (1972, 123–127; 1976, 128–130). The notion of *sense* is connected from the outset with that



of *knowledge*. The first argument says that not only the object but also the *mode of identification* of the object enters into the characterization of what it is that the language-user *knows*. In this way, the theory of reference does not fully display what it is that a speaker knows when he understands an expression, what proposition the object of his knowledge is. Reference is always mediated by sense. The second argument says that we cannot attribute to speakers *as much as* the full and direct grasp of the reference of expression: the grasp of reference is always relativised and limited by the objectivity of the meanings manifested by language fragments.

When one accepts the sense/reference distinction, the difference between an M-sentence and a T-sentence becomes relevant. In the framework of a T-theory, an M-sentence is nothing but a substitution for a T-sentence. In an M-theory of meaning, however, the M-sentence differs from the T-sentence insofar as the meaning of an M-sentence is not dependent either on theorems of the general T-theory or on knowledge of the world (or metalinguistic knowledge). This constitutes exactly the difference between knowing of a sentence that it is true, and knowing the proposition expressed by the sentence. Dummett, following Frege, argues that a metalinguistic knowledge of the truth of the theorem is insufficient for an understanding of the expression. Within a T-theory, knowledge presupposes a prior understanding of the metalanguage; within an M-theory, on the contrary, propositional knowledge *directly* ascribes to the expressions their sense, in this way mediating their reference. One more point should be added here to clarify the distinction between a meaning theory as an M-theory and a meaning theory as a T-theory. Propositional knowledge, to be counted as *knowledge*, is not a *knowing that* but a *knowing how*; the whole point of an M-theory of meaning is that it displays the *canonical means* by which the M-sentence is to be derived. Propositions are deductively interconnected and their derivation is realised *atomistically* (Dummett, 1975, 114), i.e., their derivation is governed by *conceptual* or *internal* constraints. This approach contrasts with the holistic view of language in the same way as the dependence of the meaning of a T-sentence on the T-totality can be regarded as an *external* constraint.

The second Fregean distinction, that between *sense* and *force*, has been neglected as well by post-Fregean extensional semantics — to an even greater extent than the sense/reference distinction.

Without the sense/force distinction, a speaker's understanding of any given sentence would have to be taken to consist of the knowledge of every feature of the use of that sentence, that is of the entire significance of any possible utterance of the sentence. For Davidson, the trouble is that this would be the logical consequence of his neglect of the sense/force distinction, leading to the rather absurd thesis that the truth conditions of a sentence determine even the *conventional* significance of an utterance (see Dummett, 1976, 73). In my opinion, a theory of meaning where the core theory of reference *predicts* the practice of using language, the exact utterances of any speaker cannot be but mistaken. It cannot be a solution that incorporates the factors of force or of language use as variables within a T-theory, as Davidson's does. Dummett, on the contrary, proposes inchoatively to treat the relation of sense and force in a *unified* but not reductionistic or 'deterministic' framework. Therefore, the hierarchy of reference, sense and force within the Fregean construction must be modified: the meaning of the sentence must be a *possible ground for accepting* it as true or false, as well as, more generally, for *using* it correctly. A conception of meaning, according to Dummett, going beyond Frege, is adequate only if it yields a method of deriving from the meaning of a sentence everything that must be *known* by the speaker if he is to be able to *use* the sentence; and among the things he must know is what counts as a ground for the *truth* of that sentence. Obviously, the Fregean construction takes a new orientation with Dummett: the core of the theory of meaning is now the theory of sense, whereas the theory of reference and the theory of force decay to peripheral theories.

### 1.2.2. *The transgression of idiolects*

Let me now take up a central point which indicates clearly the limits of an intensional semantics à la Dummett. The interest in meaning, for Dummett, is in fact the interest in *how language works* — a complete theory of meaning for a language is a complete theory of how language *functions as a language* (Dummett, 1975, 99). And Dummett does not hesitate to say that to give an account of how the language works is to give an account of how its speakers communicate with it. It seems to me, however, that the notion of *communication* is loosely used here because the functioning of language, as also in Davidson, is seen essentially as a process of understanding that is receptive and is therefore a unilateral pole of the communicative relation. Nevertheless, the knowledge of language is

a *practical knowledge*, the knowledge of how to speak the language. A theory of meaning as an M-theory is the theoretical representation of a practical ability (Dummett, 1976, 69) and this practical ability lies in the speaker's grasp of a set of *deductively interconnected* propositions.

The point stressed as central here is that the system of deductively interconnected propositions serves as the *coordination system* of the speakers of the language. And this deviates fundamentally from Davidsonian holism. Even if the Davidsonian T-totality as the set of T-sentences could be considered *systematic* (yielding, in this hypothetical case, a 'full-blooded' theory of meaning), it would be the systematicity of an *idiolect* and *not of a language* (or an interpersonal system of communication). The holist tends to shrink the notion of a language down to that of an idiolect: each individual speaker is to be conceived as having his 'personal' T-theory, incorporating in its base T-totality all the judgments he personally makes (Dummett, 1975, 135). To coordinate the idiolectical T-totalities, the holist invokes the Principle of Charity. According to the spirit of holism, there is no possible theory of *disagreement* between speakers nor of *mistakes* of the idiolectical judgments. Judgments of truth value will diverge when they relate not just to sentences with indexical features but also to even non-indexical sentences. Dummett argues repeatedly that the system of interconnected propositions being achieved *atomistically* is *interpersonal* 'evidence' in itself. Propositional knowledge is *general* and the M-theory in that way becomes a theory of meaning of the language as a social practice. In my opinion, however, this conclusion cannot be drawn from the 'intensional premisses'.

### 1.2.3. *Belief and understanding in an intensional semantics*

It is now easy to state how an extensional and an intensional semantics diverge in their valuation of *belief* and *understanding*. Recall the T-theory's claims about the use of each individual sentence: the T-theory is supposed to give the *perfect* fit and not just the best possible fit between the conditions for the truth of the sentence and the conditions under which the sentence is held to be true. The existence of these two distinct sets of conditions explains the genesis of the concept of 'superbelief'. We know already that the super-belief is a *single*, undiscriminated belief, of a formal nature, to be distinguished from the desires and beliefs that are the variable entities and the data for a general theory of linguistic behaviour.

However, the T-theory does not state semantically how we arrive at this single belief because this 'super-belief' does not depend upon the meanings themselves that we assign to the sentences whose truth value we are judging. The theory of meaning as a T-theory will be *in principle* solipsistic, and it is precisely to avoid solipsism that the pragmatic Principle of Charity will be needed. Dummett, in contrast, can reject the explanatory value of the notion of 'super-belief' because of his hypostasis of *propositional knowledge*, which is general and internal evidence : this evidence can be said to be 'logical' or internal (rather than empirical-psychological or external, as it is in Davidson).

To make the workings of language open to view, Dummett, as well as Davidson, argues that any theory of meaning must yield a theory of understanding. To *know* the language is to be able to *employ* it; to employ the language is to *understand* it (Dummett, 1975, 101). Thus, the introduction of the notion of understanding seems to be tautological, much as it is in Davidson's framework as argued earlier. In Davidson, *understanding* is replacable by 'radical interpretation', and in Dummett by 'atomistic or molecular derivation of knowledge'. What then is the point of the debate between Davidson and Dummett concerning understanding ? In Davidson, as we saw, understanding or 'radical interpretation' has to be considered as something more than 'knowledge' of T-theoretically dependent sentences -- it is *also* knowledge of the pragmatic Principle of Charity. In Dummett's neo-Fregean context, on the contrary, no leap outside the theory is required : no aspect of understanding here is lost when replaced by 'knowledge'. To *understand*, in intensional semantics, is to move in the generalized linguistic practice, in the coordinated system of interconnected propositions; the notion of understanding in Dummett's work is *really* tautological with the notion of 'propositional knowledge'.

### 1.3. *The theory of meaning as a C-theory*

#### 1.3.1. *Intentionality and its conventional force*

A struggle of Homeric quality — to quote Strawson (1971, 173) — arises when the theories of meaning already discussed meet our third prototype : the theory of meaning as a C-theory. Wittgenstein, Austin and Grice have advocated restructuring of the Fregean construction even more radical than Dummett proposes. When the theory of force gets priority (as in Wittgenstein, Austin and Grice),

its relation with the sub-theories of reference and of sense becomes enigmatic. Force, indeed, has to be elucidated in terms that do not presuppose meaning and truth. The strategy will be that force obtains its theoretical independence when defined *as action* of which the immediate correlate should be the *communication-intention*. The theory of force I would like to advocate is what I call the '*non-foundationalist*' variant of Grice's initial thesis on meaning — this is the variant where the dialectics of *intention* and (linguistic) *convention* results in the fact that solely (linguistically) manifested intentionality can be said to be the correlate of the action of language fragments, or of the force of speech.

The fundamental distinction between 'natural meaning' and 'non-natural meaning', proposed in Grice's famous article (1957), creates the theoretical gap between an M-sentence *x means p*, and an  $M_{nn}$ -sentence *by (uttering or doing) x, U meant p*. Because of the dialectical relation of intention and convention as the correlate of linguistic action,  $M_{nn}$ -sentences must be seen as constrained by a theory of meaning which I call the *theory of meaning as a C-theory*. This is why, in my opinion, the  $M_{nn}$ -sentence *by x, U meant p* identifies with the sentence : there is a convention whereby the members of a community P (and U is a member of P), when they utter or do x, mean by it that p. I am aware, of course, of the enormous complexity of the option taken here. I evoke the two points that are of greatest importance to the topic of this paper : Firstly, how is the  $M_{nn}$ -sentence related to the propositional content expressed by the sentence (or in other words : how can it be that *intentional* semantics is *intensional* ?) ? And secondly, how is the proposed parallelism between intentionality and conventionality to be understood ?

In some versions of the theory of meaning as a C-theory, it is implicitly admitted that intensional entities are needed to render language use understandable. Facts about the use of a language in the speech community have to be introduced in the following manner : L is the language of community P, and S means p in the language L of P. The point here is that, if the theory is to give the description of the linguistic practice of the community, one has to consider L as a *function from  $M_{nn}$ -sentences to intensions*. Let me try to clarify this idea (see Loar, 1976, as well). One should admit, within the framework of this version of the theory of meaning as a C-theory, that the *intension* (or, to avoid terminological confusion, the sentential or propositional meaning) assigned to a sentence

*determines* what communication-intention a speaker may have, if his utterance is conventional. In other words, a speaker utters a sentence *S* with its conventional force only if he does so with the intention of thereby meaning that *p*, where *p* is the intension (or propositional meaning) assigned by the language (or a function) to *S*. This is the core of the defence of my position that an extensional semantics and an intentional (with *t*!) semantics can never be reconciled. The constraint of conventionality on the meaning of an  $M_{nn}$ -sentence can be stated as follows: the  $M_{nn}$ -sentence *fits* its propositional meaning, provided that the speaker's intentions and the illocutionary force of the utterance are appropriate to the content function, assigned by the language *L* to *S*. Why, then, is this theory of meaning a C-theory? Because there exists the *overall convention* — the super-convention — that, if the language *L* is the function characterising this particular set of propositional meanings, then any member of the community *P* utters *S* only if his utterance *fits* one of these propositional meanings. The constraining power of conventionality becomes obvious when the meaning of the  $M_{nn}$ -sentence (by *x* *U* meant *p*) is defined in the following way: by *x*, in a community *P*, and for some *L* being the language of *P* and assigning a set of propositional meanings, *U* meant *p* which is in the range of this set of meanings. The problem that remains, surely, lies in the *nature* of the conventionality constraining the meaning of all  $M_{nn}$ -sentences. Conventionality renders it possible for speakers of a language to make inferences as to each other's communication-intentions. These inferences rest on *mutual knowledge* (according to David Lewis' definition of 'convention'): a convention in *P* is a regularity among members of *P* which they mutually acknowledge obtains. The mutual knowledge then is a real competence relative to the effective language and involves, moreover, the background knowledge of *L* as a set of propositional meanings.

This last point is crucial in that it sheds conclusive light on the problem of the parallelism of intention and convention. This particular 'holism', if I can use the term here — according to which the speaker's knowledge that the other members of the community *know*, as well as the knowledge that utterances fitting propositional meanings of *L* belong to *L* by virtue of its overall conventionality — abolishes at least one misunderstanding, namely that of the *one to one* correspondence between specific intentions and specific conventions; the conventionality of expressions is derived from the overall convention that makes *L* the language of *P*. This version of

the theory of meaning as a C-theory is the alternative to other versions where meaning is explained in terms of utterer's meaning without any need to introduce conventionality. This latter path can be rather dangerous, for it can head towards an atomistic and psychologistic or foundationalist theory of meaning where the internal structure of the utterer is said to be expressed *directly* through his linguistic behaviour without any constraint of conventionality. I prefer the other way, defending the holistic view where the conventional meaning of expressions is derived from the mutually known overall conventionality of the language L in P, and where utterers are participating in a common patrimony L in P.

### 1.3.2. *The cooperative mechanism*

The seminal idea of the theory of meaning as a C-theory is, so to speak, the commonplace idea that *meaning is intending*. Grice suggests informally that 'by x U meant p' is equivalent to 'U intended the utterance of x to produce some effect in an audience by means of the recognition of this intention' (1957, 385); but he quickly adds the qualification that the recognition of this intention underlying x is for the audience a *reason* for its response. So we may restate Grice's analysis in the following way: U *meant* p by (uttering) x if and only if U uttered x *intending* (1) that his utterance of x produce a certain response r in a certain audience A, (2) that A recognise U's intention (1), and (3) that A's recognition of U's intention (1) functions as A's reason for A's response r. According to the non-foundationalist version of the theory of meaning as a C-theory defended earlier, the  $M_{nn}$ -sentence will be said to be constrained by a C-theory when the  $M_{nn}$ -sentence *by x U meant p* can be translated into the sentence: there is a convention whereby the members of a community P, when they utter x, mean by it p. This condition takes into account that there is no inference by the audience A except with the help of *conventions*. So we get the final formula: U *meant* p by (uttering) x if and only if U uttered x *intending* (1) that x have a certain (conventional) feature f, (2) that a certain audience A recognise, by mutual knowledge, that x is f, (3) that A *infer* from the fact that x is f that U uttered x *intending* (4), (4) that U's utterance of x produce a certain response r in A, and (5) that A's recognition of U's intention (4) shall function as A's reason for its response r. Without bringing in here Schiffer's sophistication of the formula (see Schiffer, 1972), let us recall that the response r is an action of A, to be seen as an intention or as an effective act.

It will be obvious that the conditions (1) and (2) of the final formula, which say that the utterance is conventional and that, too, the inference is conventionally motivated, are totally absent in the account given by the foundationalist version (or the 'behavioural' approach; see Bennett, 1976) of intentional semantics. Conventionality is *intended*, and no recognition of intensions is possible without presupposing the conventionalisation of intentions. This dialectical relation of intention and convention excludes *private* intentions from the theory. Moreover — and here we touch the core of the whole programme — the feature *f*, which *x* has to have and which is inferred by the recognition procedure, is conventional as well as propositional. It is clear now why a theory of meaning as a C-theory is both intentional and intensional at one and the same time. However, the conventionality mentioned here does not depend on particular and one-to-one conventions but on the *super-convention* which ensures that, if *L* is the characteristic function of the set of linguistic conventions or propositional meanings, any member of the community *P* utters *S* only if his utterance *fits* a conventional or propositional meaning. This cannot be grounded within the theory itself but appeals to the *cooperative nature* of discourse and to other underlying principles that are the possibility conditions of intentional language use.

### 1.3.3. *Belief and understanding in an intentional semantics*

A few brief remarks should suffice to clarify how *belief* and *understanding* fit into the theory of meaning as a C-theory. At first sight, these notions might appear to lack the theoretical consistency they may have in extensional semantics or in the neo-Fregean theory of meaning. Let us go back to the definition of a *communication-intention*. The response *r* of the audience *A* can be an intention or a belief (thus, a mental state), as can be the set of beliefs at the origin of the communication-intention in the speaker. But these beliefs in the speaker and in the audience do not have any determinative and substantial influence on the nature of the communication-intention, and thus on the communicative relation between language users. They are not of interest in the philosophy of language (the 'logic of conversation', the theory of meaning) so much as in the philosophy of mind where their genesis and their diversity can be investigated. *Mutual knowledge*, defining conventionality and responsible for the match between the intending and the recognition of the intention, is not a belief. Beliefs are either the facultative starting point or the endpoint of the process of signifying, without



determinative power on *meaning as intending itself*. Mutual knowledge is *real* knowledge (of each other's knowledge) and conventions are as *objective* as they can be — mental states (and specifically epistemic states) are variables not calculable in the theory of meaning as a C-theory because they lack the objectivity and 'reality' of mutual knowledge and of the super-convention. It will be evident that this 'reality' and objectivity of mutual knowledge and of the super-convention is founded upon the generality of the speaker's internal structure, upon the generality of the effective means, and upon the generality of the projected ends of linguistic action.

As I said earlier, *understanding* is a generic notion, loosely identified with *knowledge* within the three prototypes under investigation: it draws together 'radical interpretation', propositional grasping, as well as recognition of intending. The recognition of feature *f* in *x* (or of the linguistic convention) can only misleadingly be called 'understanding'. Because common knowledge is general to all members of the community *P*, no understanding of another speaker's intentions exists as there is no understanding (in the strict sense) of the complex intending of the speaker. Understanding, in an intentional semantics, is not even tautological as it is when it mentions propositional knowledge. In the framework of the theory of meaning as a C-theory, this notion seems superfluous and even out of place.

## 2. *The pragmatic constraints on theories of meaning*

None of the theories of meaning under consideration define meaning as a property or as a process internal to the 'solitary life of the mind', as would be said by Husserl (*einsamen Seelenleben*); nor is the relation between meaning and its manifestation regarded in these theories as purely *expressive*, as is implied in the Chomskyan neo-Cartesian frame (see Parret, 1975). Two indisputable statements can be made concerning our three prototypes: in each of them, meaning has to do with *semiotic systems*, in particular with language (with natural languages, to be more specific), and in each of them meaning has to do with *communication*.

Indeed, meaning is seen in each case as language-dependent. Davidson's theory of meaning is a *holistic* theory of meaning as a T-theory *for natural languages*. Recall that the theory purports to interpret each sentence by locating its position within the truth

determination for the language *as a whole* : truth conditions of any sentence are determined *by its structure*. Propositional meaning, in Dummett's neo-Fregean perspective, is not a thought or a mental entity — it is the correlate of the utterance atomistically composed of linguistic properties. The approach I advocated in intentional semantics requires language-dependency of meaning : I stressed the central position of *conventional significance* as the possibility condition of mutual knowledge and of the transfer of intentions.

Secondly, meaning in all cases is *communicative*. The methodological necessity of, respectively, 'radical interpretation', 'propositional grasping' and 'recognition of intentions' shows how communication is possible between speakers with initially different structure and attributing partly different contents to their linguistic expressions. Employing and understanding language, in each case, is a *communicative* functioning of language use. Their language-dependency and communication-orientation constitute the common ground enabling the philosopher to bring about a confrontation of the three prototypes. The epistemological structure of these theories of meaning proves that three original and divergent solutions are being proposed to deal with one and the same problem, namely that of the communicative functioning of language, and hence of natural languages.

### *2.1. The deduction of the pragmatic constraints*

On my view, all theories of meaning dealing with the communicative functioning of natural languages are subject to the axioms of the 'logic of communicability'. These axioms, specifically, constitute the pragmatological implications of all these theories of meaning. Three components of the 'logic of communicability' can be distinguished (for more elaborate treatment, see Parret, 1976b and 1977). No communicability of language is possible without a RELATION BETWEEN EXPRESSION AND CONTENT (or, more specifically, between the linguistic or semiotic fragment and its meaning or content), nor without INTER-LOCUTIVE RELATION between the members of a language community, nor without some kind of 'understood' (interpreted, grasped or recognised) GENERALITY serving as the common ground for communicating. These three components can easily be deduced as DIMENSIONS OF THE LOGIC OF COMMUNICABILITY. The principles (or *constraints*), on each dimension, can have a weak or a strong force — I distinguish, for each dimension, a weak (or un-

marked), an intermediate (or neutral) and a strong (or marked) position. Let me now attempt a taxonomy.

The first group concerns the *connection between expression and content* :

PRINCIPLE OF MANIFESTATION (1) :

any expression of the language in context manifests a content;

PRINCIPLE OF GENERATIVITY (or of INTERPRETABILITY) (2):

the relation of the expression to the manifested content is derivational (canonical).

PRINCIPLE OF VERACITY (3) :

the manifestation of the content by the expression in context is equivalent to the presentation of the truth of that content.

The second group concerns the *interlocutive relation* : :

PRINCIPLE OF RECIPROCITY (4) :

a linguistic fragment is addressed by a member of the community of interlocutors to another member of this community understanding this linguistic fragment;

PRINCIPLE OF COORDINATION (5) :

a linguistic fragment, addressed by one member of the community of interlocutors to another member of that community, serves as a homogenising factor of the internal socio-psychological structures of the members of the community.

PRINCIPLE OF COOPERATION (6) :

each linguistic fragment which serves as a homogenising factor of the internal socio-psychological structure of the members of the language community is at the same time effective in homogenising the mutual coordination systems of these members.

PRINCIPLE OF RATIONALITY (7) :

given a desired end, there will be a *general* choice for those *means* which most effectively and at least cost

will realise this end;

PRINCIPLE OF CHARITY (8) :

the generally desired final *end* is truth and its communicability;

PRINCIPLE OF HUMANITY (9) :

the pattern of relations between knowledge, beliefs, desires on the one hand, and the world on the other, is *general* among the interlocutors on the basis of the *generality* of the interlocutor's internal structure.

2.2. *The distribution of the pragmatic constraints*

Let me proceed now to the reconstruction of the pragmatical constraints on our three prototypes (in the order of intentional semantics, neo-Fregean intensional semantics, and extensional semantics).

(A.) *INTENTIONAL SEMANTICS* is governed by the constellation of the pragmatical constraints of GENERATIVITY (or INTERPRETABILITY), COORDINATION and RATIONALITY. 1. The manifested content (or meaning) is regarded as *canonically* related to the linguistic fragment — significance is 'derived', being totally determined by the semiotic conventions of the fragment. Production and recognition of the relation of content to expression belongs to the definition itself of *meaning as intending*; but since the recognition of the primary intention is also intended, the meaning (or content) cannot be but derivationally manifested. The Principle of Manifestation is deficient because it does not take into account the conventionality of significance, whereas the Principle of Veracity is too strong, the truth of the intentional function (which is at the same time intensional, as said earlier) not being connoted. 2. The importance of the *Cooperative Principle* in Grice's *Logic of Conversation* is widely recognised. The *Cooperative Principle* is, in fact, more like our Principle of Coordination (see especially Kasher, 1976): Grice postulates maximising the informative transfer of intentions, more than he requires reciprocal and teleological change of the *systems* of coordination, which should mean *real* cooperation. We have seen that beliefs, desires and intentions as mental entities are start- and end-points of the interlocutive relation without determining the interlocutive process of intending itself. In intentional semantics, meaning does not accomplish progressive

identity of the systems of coordination. 3. Rationality consists in the fact that the generality of the *means* is favoured with the help of, for example, the Gricean maxims of *quantity*, *quality*, *relation*, and *modality*, worked out in his *Logic of Conversation*. It has been showed elsewhere (especially Kasher, 1976 and Parret, 1976a) how the Gricean maxims are, in fact, related to a Principle of Rationality more than to the Gricean so-called *Cooperative Principle*. No aspect of Grice's intentional theory of meaning requires the generality of *ends* and of the *internal structure* of the speakers as a projected common ground for communicating. As a result, intentional semantics can be defined as the THEORY OF THE RATIONAL COORDINATION OF THE PRODUCTION AND RECOGNITION OF INTENTIONS (the dialectics here expressing the so-called interpretability or generativity of intentionality).

(B.) *INTENSIONAL SEMANTICS* is governed by the constellation of the pragmatical constraints of MANIFESTATION, RECIPROCITY and RATIONALITY, the weakest constellation possible. 1. Propositional grasping is not derivational and canonical, but *direct* and unmediated. Sence, defined in Frege as the mode of identification of the reference, is totally language-dependent and no 'interpretation' or (hermeneutical) understanding is needed to present the propositional content to the interlocutors of the community. The Principle of Manifestation exercises only the weakest pragmatical determination. 2. A similar remark can be made concerning the interlocutive relation. We saw that even the notion of 'understanding' is out of place in a neo-Fregean framework. Nevertheless, meaning is simply *knowledge* that is common to the interlocutors, transcending in this way their idiolects. 3. With the generality, characterising communicability as a whole, being achieved *within* the theory by the powerful means of propositional contents, one needs to constrain the theory only by the weak Principle of Rationality — just as in the Gricean framework, the M-theory and the C-theory being both *intensional* theories of meaning. However, rationality is not a matter of *general choice* here, as it is in Grice; rather, it is *imposed*, i.e., knowledge deviating from the propositional contents is not only 'irrational' but even meaningless and self-defeating. The weakness of the pragmatical constraint here forces one rightly to say that there is so much rationality within the theory that only a very small common ground of generality has to be presupposed outside the theory in order to constrain adequately the theory of meaning as an M-theory.

(c.) *EXTENSIONAL SEMANTICS*, in the Davidsonian sense, is governed by the constellation of the pragmatical constraints of VERACITY, COORDINATION and CHARITY. 1. Truth conditions are necessarily manifested by the expression. A meaningful sentence is a T-sentence, and the content of the language as a whole (as an infinite set of utterances) consists partly of the T-theory itself. 2. The necessity of maximising agreement can be seen as an effect of the Principle of Coordination which requires explicit homogenisation of the 'psychological structure' (or internal structure) of the interlocutors, i.e., their grounds for believing that sentences are true. Maximising of agreement is a *coordination* requirement rather than real cooperation which should presuppose active modification of one internal structure by another *for the sake* of the uniformity of the internal structures themselves. I do not believe that Davidson's claim of maximising agreement goes as far, precisely because of the fact that Charity combines with maximising agreement, which means that the motivation is *external* to the internal structures of the interlocutors. 3. Indeed, the Principle of Charity proposes truth as the generally desired end (final end). This transforms the interlocutive relation into a 'logical' rather than 'psychological' relation : truth being the final end, the interlocutive relation is coordinating rather than cooperative. It is interesting to notice how the deviation from the Quinean 'translation' to Davidsonian 'radical interpretation' at the same time diverges from the constellation of pragmatical constraints on the theory of meaning. Because Quine does not calculate the belief component, his theory needs to be constrained by the strongest possible constellation of pragmatical principles, the principles of VERACITY, COOPERATION and HUMANITY. The indeterminacy of translation, as well as the underdetermination of scientific theories in Quine, would lead to a semantic chaos in the absence of very strong implied positions; to escape from semantic chaos, the interlocutive relation needs to be *cooperative*, and the common ground or possibility condition for communicating can only be the generality of the *motivation* to translate, indeterminacy notwithstanding. This involves the Principle of Humanity. Quine, of course, states the Principle of Humanity in behaviouristic terms, interpreting the generality of the motivations as *dispositions*.

It must be clear now that the constellations of the pragmatical constraints underlying all theories of meaning are responsible for the coherence of theory formation in the domain of language and meaning. Let me formulate here two theses concerning the distribution of these principles in all kinds of theories of meaning.

THESIS I : any theory of meaning, whatever its substantial doctrine may be, is governed by a *constellation of three pragmatical constraints*, the first concerning the relation between the linguistic expression and the manifested content; the second, concerning the interlocutive relation; and the third, concerning the generalising nature of communicability.

Surely, the semantics of formal languages and the semantics of the orthodox mentalistic type (Katzian or even Chomskyan) escape the thesis. It is obvious that Katzian semantics, for example, does not deal with the communicative functioning of meaningful language use. All other types of semantics are subject to Thesis I.

THESIS II : from the point of view of the axis *extensionalism-intentionalism*, the more extensional the theory of meaning, the stronger must be its constellation of pragmatical principles.

This is straightforward. The types of intensional semantics, under its neo-Fregean or its Gricean form, are able to conceptualise *within the theory* a lot more of communicative functioning : the description and explanation of success and failure of communication forms the content of the theory itself, having at its disposal such powerful theoretical means as, for example, the notions of 'propositional knowledge' and 'conventional significance'. However, the extensional theory of meaning has to be dominated by stronger pragmatical constraints in order to be able to describe and to explain success and failure of communicative functioning.

By way of conclusion, a remark on the scope of my approach to theories of meaning. Socio-semantics, neo-Fregean semantics, and intentional semantics present divergent solutions to one and the same problem : how can the communicative functioning of language use be described, or rather, how can it be explained ? *The less there is within the theory, the more there is in the constellation of pragmatical constraints*, and vice versa. It is the task of the epistemologist to identify as explicitly as possible the positions of theory and 'meta-theory' (or constellation of pragmatical constraints, or the 'implied options'), their interdependence and independence, and to evaluate as sensitively as possible, so to speak, the 'aesthetic' shape of their intertwining.

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