

STILL AGAINST DIRECT REFERENCE

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1. The Methodology of Naturalistic Semantics

1.1 Semantic Tasks

“Basic” task: to explain the natures of meanings. This is too simple. What counts as a meaning? Need a non-*ad-hoc* subject matter.

A property plays a “semantic” role if and only if it is a property of the sort specified by *t*-clauses, and, if it were the case that a token thought had the property, it would be in virtue of this fact that the token can explain the behavior of the thinker or be used as a guide to reality.

A property is a meaning if and only if it plays a semantic role in that sense. And the basic task is to explain the nature of meanings in that sense.

Closely related to “normative” task: explaining the nature of the properties that we *ought to ascribe* for semantic purposes. *First methodological proposal*: tackle the basic task by tackling the normative one.

Contrast with “the descriptive task”: explaining the natures of the properties we *do ascribe* in attitude ascriptions for semantic purposes; the semantic *status quo*.

Avoid verbal issues. Any definition of the task that talks of meanings should be accompanied by an explication that demonstrates why studying meanings is worthwhile.

Four points: (a) utterances as routes to thoughts; (b) hence primary interest in conventional meanings on occasions of utterance, meanings of tokens; (c) leads to an interest in conventional meaning of types; (d) Possibility that a token has more than one meaning.

1.2 Methodology for the Normative Task

Given the apparent success of our current practices, evidence for a descriptive theory will be some evidence for a normative one. *Second methodological proposal* look to the descriptive task for evidence for the normative/basic one.

1.3 Methodology for the Descriptive Task

If starting from scratch, must use the “ultimate” method. Two stages: first, we must identify some apparently uncontroversial examples of *F*'s and non-*F*'s. Second, we must examine the examples to determine the nature of **being an F**.

Third methodological proposal: use the “ultimate” method on putative meanings to accomplish the descriptive task.

2. A Truth-Referential Theory

“Representationalism”: the meaning of *a sentence* token is exhausted by the properties that determine its *truth condition*; the meaning of *a word* token is exhausted by properties that determine its *reference*.

2.1 The Descriptive Task

Opaque ascriptions: “substitutivity of identity” does not hold.

- (1) Ralph believes that the man in the brown hat is a spy.
- (2) Ralph believes that Ortcutt is a spy,

Singular terms in the t-clauses of opaque ascriptions ascribe the property of (purportedly) referring to a specified object under a specified mode.

2.2 The Normative/Basic Task

Simple yet powerful argument that are *really* meanings: ascribing them seems successful at explaining behavior and guiding us to reality.

2.3 Other Meanings

“Simply transparent” reading of (1) and (2): ascribe the property of simply referring to a specified object. Also “rapport-transparent”:

- (3) Ortcutt is such that Ralph believes him to be a spy

A token belief or utterance has more than one meaning property.

2.4 Explaining Meanings

The modes for some words may be descriptive but the modes for some *must* be causal (or descriptive causal), because description theories in general are *essentially* incomplete.

Explanations must appeal to historical, reliabilist, or teleological causal relations. E.g: mode for ‘Mark Twain’: property of referring by means of causal chains grounded in Mark Twain and involving the sounds, inscriptions, and so on, that constitute the history of the name’s use to designate Mark Twain. Mode for ‘Samuel Clemens’ is similar but involves the sounds, inscriptions, and so on, of this different name.

3. Direct Reference

3.1 Ignoring Causal Modes

DR: the meaning or “semantic content” of a name is simply its referent. Surprising given traditional problems, e.g. with identity statements. Yet Soames in *Beyond Rigidity* thinks “highly motivated”, “no better candidate”.

No mention of causal modes. Too preposterous? Even though alien to the semantic tradition surely should be a *candidate* for being the meaning. Without Cartesianism, the cursory dismissal of a causal mode needs an *argument*. None attempted by DR.

3.2 The Argument for Causal Modes as Meanings

- (1) A name in a t-clause of an apparently opaque attitude ascription conveys information about a mode of referring to the name’s bearer.
 - (2) A name’s mode of referring to its bearer is causal not descriptive.
 - (3) Apparently opaque attitude ascriptions explain behavior in virtue of what they convey.
 - (4) So, the causal mode is the name’s meaning.
- (2) must be accepted by any proponent of DR. (1) and (3) are widely accepted and Salmon and Soames do not attempt to throw any doubt on them. (4) follows easily.

Likely DR response: semantics is not concerned with this property of causing behavior. (i) If not merely verbal, need an argument that the property of a name that causes behavior *is not* theoretically interesting. (ii) Need an argument that a name's property of simply referring to its bearer *is* theoretically interesting. No arguments attempted by DR

That is the core of the case against DR.

3.3 Braun's Defense of DR

The point is *not* that if DR were true the ascriptions *could not* explain behavior but that ascribing causal modes of reference *does*, gives a *more complete* explanation.

3.4 The Pragmatic Defense of DR

We *need* people regularly to convey information about modes and we would *expect* there to be a semantic convention to facilitate their doing so. People regularly do convey this information which is evidence that doing so is a semantic convention. And opaque attitude ascriptions conveys information about modes.

3.5 Identity Statements

Folk normally distinguish the meanings of ' $a = a$ ' and ' $a = b$ ' in using t-clauses to serve their semantic purposes (descriptive), and they are right to do so (normative).

Tom says " $a = b$ " to Mary and as a result Dick says "Mary has just learned that $a = b$ ".

According to DR, the proposition he semantically expresses that Mary has just learned is a triviality. Soames unflinchingly bites the bullet.