

Collective Intentionality in the Theory of Meaning

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Intentional Semantics

A purely formal redundancy or disquotational semantics has all the attractions of simplicity and none of the virtues of offering a noncircular explication of meaning. In accounting for referential and sentential meaning, we may need to devise a more general form of the mapping of language unto meanings than simply stripping off the quotation marks from a term or sentence. We can do so by prefixing ordered sets of terms' referents and sentences' truth conditions with an intentional operator that represents a thinking subject's psychologically *intending* a specific referent by the use of a specific linguistic referring term or sentence at a particular time and in a particular manner, within the conventions of a particular language.¹

What semantics needs, on an intentional account, beginning with the reference of singular referring terms, is an entirely general explanation of how it is that any chosen term ' T ' refers to any referent R , in what would then be the formal set theoretical semantic structure, $\langle T, R \rangle$, and that any sentence $\lceil p \rceil$ can represent any state of affairs A . We need such generality in order to account for the meaning of language uses in all cases. If we consider how it is that an arbitrary term ' T ' can refer to an arbitrary referent R , it appears natural to suppose that this occurs from an intentional standpoint when and only when a thinking subject *intends* to designate R by the use of ' T ', and *intends* by the use of an arbitrary sentence $\lceil p \rceil$ to represent an arbitrary state of affairs A as its truth condition.

The trouble is that in a purely formal semantics there is no principled way to achieve the required generality. There is no purely formal way to correlate an arbitrary term with an arbitrary referent, despite the fact that reference in thought and language is in fact potentially arbitrary in just this linguistically conventional kind of way. A purely formal semantics accordingly tries to make a virtue out of the necessity of being limited formally and syntactically to disquotations in correlating singular referring terms with referents and sentences with truth conditions, and leaves the rest to 'pragmatics'. The theory does not explain reference in every case, as we know from counterexamples involving the possibility of idiolects like codes and secret languages that deliberately violate normal linguistic conventions but still manage to express meanings among those who understand them.

An intentional prefix is now introduced to indicate that a thinking subject s intends I by term ' T ' belonging to a particular language L in which s is competent at a certain time t and in a certain manner m a particular referent R ; or likewise intends a particular state of affairs A by the use of sentence $\lceil p \rceil$, to be compared with their previously formalized purely formal counterparts, for intended referential and sentential meaning. The I operator is undefined, corresponding to the standard assumption in an intentionalist philosophy of mind that intending is a primitive or conceptually irreducible relation. We begin with the formulas:

(1.1) Intentional Reference:

$$sI^m_s \langle T'_{L_S}, R \rangle$$

(1.2) Intentional Sentential Truth Conditions:

$$sI^m_s \langle \lceil p \rceil_{L_S}, A \rangle \rightarrow [\text{TRUE}_{L_S} \lceil p \rceil_{L_S} \leftrightarrow A]$$

The subscript ' s ' in (1.1) and (1.2) that qualifies the language L in which the subject intends a particular state of affairs A by sentence $\lceil p \rceil$ is not a variable bound by the existential quantifier, but an index by which the language is qualified and specified. We can interpret these formulations as convenient shorthand for the more perspicuous logically equivalent statements:

(1.3) Explicit Indexing of Truth Conditions to Language:

- (i) $[\cdot s \int^{tm} s \langle T_{L_S}, R \rangle \square s = \hat{a}] \rightarrow [\cdot s \int^{tm} s \langle T_{L_{\hat{a}}}, R \rangle \leftrightarrow [\cdot s \int^{tm} s \langle T_{L_S}, R \rangle]]$
- (ii) $[\cdot s \int^{tm} s \langle \lceil p \rceil_{L_S}, A \rangle \square s = \hat{a}] \rightarrow [TRUE_{L_{\hat{a}}} \lceil p \rceil_{L_{\hat{a}}} \leftrightarrow A] \leftrightarrow [\cdot s \int^{tm} s \langle \lceil p \rceil_{L_S}, A \rangle \rightarrow [TRUE_{L_S} \lceil p \rceil_{L_S} \leftrightarrow A]]$

We easily obtain the deflationary or disquotational case as a limiting special application of intentional intentional semantics, for both the reference of individual terms and the truth conditions of sentences:

(1.4) Intentional Semantic Version of Disquotation:

$$\cdot s \int^{tm} s \langle T_{L_S}, T \rangle$$

(where s intendstm that $R = T$ or intendstm that ' T ' in L_S refers to T)

In particular, then, $\cdot s \int^{tm} s \langle \text{'Fido'}_{L_S}, \text{Fido} \rangle$.

(1.5) Intentional Semantic Disquotational Sentential Truth Conditions:

$$\cdot s \int^{tm} s \langle \lceil p \rceil_{L_S}, p \rangle \rightarrow [TRUE_{L_S} \lceil p \rceil_{L_S} \leftrightarrow p]$$

(where s intendstm that $A \leftrightarrow p$ or intendstm that ' p ' in L_S represents A)

represents A)

Here we obtain at no extra cost a Ramseyan deflationary application or Davidsonian T-schema version of Tarski's truth convention extended generally to all languages:

$$\cdot s \int^{tm} s \langle \text{'Snow is white'}, \text{Snow is white} \rangle \rightarrow [TRUE_{L_S} \lceil \text{Snow is white} \rceil_{L_S} \leftrightarrow \text{Snow is white}].$$

The intentionality of the intentional semantic relation is manifest in the fact that for all the familiar reasons we cannot validly infer that $\cdot s \int^{tm} s \langle T_{L_S}, R \rangle$ from the truth of the assumptions that $\cdot s \int^{tm} s \langle T_{L_S}, R \rangle$ and $R = R^*$, nor can we validly infer that $\cdot s \int^{tm} s \langle T^*_{L_S}, R \rangle$ from the truth of $\cdot s \int^{tm} s \langle T_{L_S}, R \rangle$ and $T = T^* = R$, by intersubstitution of extensionally coreferential terms or logically equivalent sentences *salva veritate*. Thus, unsurprisingly, the intending relation vital to an intentional semantics is intensional.²

It should be obvious that by design the intentional semantic theory is not limited to explanatorily vacuous disquotational or deflationary analyses of reference and truth. The 'Fido'-Fido theory of reference and Davidsonian T-schema for sentential truth conditions turn out to be special limiting cases of an intentional semantics, but are by no means the only or even the most usual or expected possibilities. Moreover, the intentional theory offers a straightforward noncircular theoretically informative psychological explanation of how it is that deflationary disquotational analyses arise, and by appeal to the content of the relevant intentions of thinking subjects avoids the formal circularity of a purely formal semantics.³

We can also present a more abstract formulation of the theory by qualifying the above definitions in terms of the possibility of thinking subjects intending a referent or state of affairs by the use of a singular referring term or declarative sentence. Intentional semantics in this way is rendered less empirical while still carrying its essential commitment to the intentionality by which a language is mapped onto its meanings:

(1.6) Abstract Formulation of Intentional Reference:

$$\diamond \cdot s \int^{tm} s \langle T_{L_S}, R \rangle$$

(1.7) Abstract Formulation of Intentional Sentential Truth Conditions:

$$\diamond \cdot s \int^{tm} s \langle \lceil p \rceil_{L_S}, A \rangle \rightarrow [TRUE_{L_S} \lceil p \rceil_{L_S} \leftrightarrow A]$$

Collective Intentionality in Semantics

We next develop a method within an intentional semantic framework for explaining the specifically social aspect of meaning. We can treat even the individual psychological states by which reference and truth conditions are determined as implicitly social by virtue of the shared praxeological contexts in which social linguistic conventions are established by means of collectively followed rules. If we prefer, we can make explicit the exact sense in which meaning is social as well as psychological as a product of *cointentionality* among a plurality of thinking subjects all of whom intend to refer to the same things by the use of the same words, or to represent the same states of affairs by the use of the same sentences.

John R. Searle, in his study, *The Construction of Social Reality*, raises the important question of whether collective intentionality is a special, uniquely distinct kind of intentionality in a category of its own, or merely a matter of several thinkers having the same intentions and iterative cross-referential beliefs about the intentions and beliefs of others in the relevant linguistic social group. Searle maintains against efforts to reduce collective intentionality to individual intentionality that collective intentionality is a primitively distinctive kind of intending, a fundamental category of intentionality that he proposes to call 'We intend', as opposed to each thinker's involvement in the collective intentionality of a social group thinking, in effect, 'I intend and I believe that you believe that I believe...etc'. He asks:

What is the relation between singular and collective intentionality, between, for example, the facts described by 'I intend' and 'We intend'? Most efforts I have seen to answer this question try to reduce 'We intentionality' to 'I intentionality' plus something else, usually mutual beliefs. The idea is that if we intend to do something together, then that consists in the fact that I intend to do it in the belief that you also intend to do it; and you intend to do it in the belief that I also intend to do it. And each believes that the other has these beliefs, and has these beliefs about these beliefs, and these beliefs about these beliefs about these beliefs...etc., in a potentially infinite hierarchy of beliefs...In my view all these efforts to reduce collective intentionality to individual intentionality fail. Collective intentionality is a biologically primitive phenomenon that cannot be reduced to or eliminated in favor of something else.⁴

If Searle is right, then collective intentionality is irreducible. Certainly the prospect of an infinite regress of iterated beliefs is disconcerting. We might nevertheless wonder whether unlimited doxastic iterations are actually required in the analysis of collective intentionality, and we might dispute whether collective intentionality in Searle's sense is presupposed by the social theory of meaning. If it is true that no reduction of collective intentionality is plausible, then we might need to countenance two fundamental and analytically unrelated types of intentionality, contrary to what would otherwise be the conservative prohibitions of Ockham's razor.

We are not presently interested in every category of collective intentionality, but only in whatever type is minimally required to understand the possibility of communication and interpretation of language use as a social phenomenon. Let us first assume for the sake of argument that Searle is correct to hold that an infinite regress of iterated beliefs about what the other members of a social group believe about what the other members believe concerning one another's intentions is theoretically intolerable. In an obvious sense, the analysis would be scotched far short of inducing even a potential infinite regress, since it is unreasonable to suppose that the members of a society could ever have finitely more beliefs about each others' beliefs about each others' intentions than there is time or available cognitive space even dispositionally to entertain a train of such beliefs. Is it true, in the first place, that doxastic iterations are required in whatever sort of collective intentionality is involved in explaining the meaning of language in an intentional semantics?

When I read a letter that arrives in the mail, I do not necessarily imagine myself even to have any particular dispositional beliefs about whether or not the author intends to use the name 'Fido' or 'fleas' referentially in the same way I do in recovering the author's meaning in announcing the news that 'Fido has fleas'. I simply do not think about such things at all; nor do I necessarily possess the requisite dispositions to accept such beliefs, whether iterative or in the simpler form of merely believing that the friend intends to use the relevant words with the same referential meanings that I intend. I may be entirely successful in communicating meanings in my own uses of language and in understanding the meanings of other language users while lacking even dispositional beliefs about the intentions of others, if, for example, I am an ontic solipsist or if I altogether reject or disbelieve in the intentionality of thought. My ability to use language effectively to express and interpret meanings should not depend on what I truly or falsely believe about the intentions of others, but only on whether or not I and the

respective language users in question do in fact intend to use the same words to refer to the same things, and on whether or not we all in fact intend to use the same declarative sentences to represent the same states of affairs. Accordingly, it might be said that social or collective intentionality need be nothing more logically or structurally elaborate than the distribution of the same intentions mapping the same linguistic entities onto the same referents or states of affairs among multiple intending subjects in a social group, the members of which can then be said to share a language.

It may often be important to believe or know that I am using the same terms or sentences with the same referential or truth conditional intentions as another language user, but it does not appear necessary in order for collective intentionality to result. Such considerations do not determine whether or not in fact I am referring to the same things or states of affairs by the same linguistic items as individuals with whom I am in communication. Indeed, I may often be in doubt as to the exact referential or truth conditional intent of another language user whose use of language I may nevertheless understand. I may require such information in order to believe that I have understood another language user, and this may frequently be true of my beliefs as I interpret the meanings another person intends to convey. I need not pretend to enter into the thoughts of another person; it is enough to understand language conventionally on the tacit assumption or presupposition that linguistically competent language users will as a matter of fact intend the same things by their uses of language that I do.⁵

What remains unclear is why anyone should expect that I as a language user in such a situation would need not only to have the same relevant semantic mapping intentions as other language users with whom I am communicating, but that I would furthermore need to believe that other language users iteratively believe that I believe that they believe, and so on, that they and I are participating in such intentions. This is certainly not true, for example, in order for me to understand the language use I find in Charles Dickens's novels. Dickens lived long before I was born, and so of necessity does not have any thoughts about me as a particular person. I can understand Dickens's referential meaning when I read in one of his books an occurrence of the name 'London', provided only that Dickens and I intend the same thing by the same word. I do not additionally need to believe that Dickens believes that I believe that he believes, and so on, that we are both intending to refer to the same sprawling English city. There is no implied reiteration of beliefs, as though we had somehow stumbled into a house of mirrors. It should be enough at most for me to believe that my intentions match up with those of the person whose referential meaning I believe myself to understand. If another language user and I are communicating in overlapping real time, then that individual may also naturally believe that my intentions match his or hers; but except in the most extraordinary circumstances where the contents of the beliefs are themselves iteratively reflexive, that is as far as it should ever need to go. Another language user does not need further to believe that I believe that he or she believes this of me, nor I of him or her. If these iterated beliefs sometimes occur, as when we make ourselves dizzy by considering as many ramified beliefs about another thinker's beliefs about our beliefs, etc., as possible, they are in any case not required or entailed by the intentional semantics that we have envisioned, and in particular, contrary to Searle, do not appear to be required for the analysis of collective intentionality. We never get very far in these iterations anyway, but run out of endurance after a handful or so of criss-crossing beliefs about another thinking subject's beliefs about our beliefs, which even so are difficult if not impossible to keep straight even in the most limited applications.⁶

Let us ask again what is going on in the social linguistic context when we learn a name's referent disquotationally and must proceed from there. 'Fido' names Fido. Very good; but what is a Fido? To return to an earlier question, what thing is referred to by the disquoted occurrence of the name, now of necessity quoted again, 'Fido'? What does the name actually refer to? Suppose that a helpful soul notices the look of puzzlement on an inquirer's face and picks up the dog or points in its direction while uttering its name or makes even more elaborate demonstrative or descriptive pronouncements, such as: '*This* is Fido!', or 'Fido is the dog that dug up your garden'? Would that help the cause of understanding what the name means? Until we reach at least this level of understanding a name's referent, we cannot approve a semantic theory as having done its job in explaining a given singular term's reference or a sentence's meaning and truth conditions. Before such a point is attained we do not understand the name's meaning. We need, generally, to understand a word's or sentence's meaning in terms of something other than an ordered set itself containing only a quoted and disquoted term or sentence whose meanings are supposed to be explained in its argument places. There is admittedly a formal semantic structure to what happens when Fido is displayed in the flesh or by whatever other means the referent of the name 'Fido' is explained, but it is not the formal structure alone that does the explaining, and we do not imagine that holding up or pointing to a referent as such

can ever be part of a theory of meaning. What, then, is it, and how is a more complete and competent semantic theory supposed to work?

We can usefully say at least the following kinds of things, once we recognize the need to supplement a purely formal semantics with psychological and sociological factors. We have argued in the case of explaining the meaning of 'Fido' that the term refers to whatever the language user intends to designate by that use of the name. This is already explanatory progress beyond the purely formal set theoretical correlation of quoted and disquoted names. At least we know that the second ordered item in the ordered set theoretical structure <'Fido', Fido> is whatever a certain social group of language users, a single intending subject in the limiting case, intend by their use of the name 'Fido'. We still do not understand what it is they intend by their use of the name on such occasions, but we are a precious step closer to the answer in which the reference of a name to a thing is at last nailed down in one of a variety of kinds of bridging semantic explanations of the workings of reference.

What more is needed? We have already indicated in an emblematic way how the reference of 'Fido' may need to be explained in practical terms. Explanations of meaning in practice are a rich psychological and sociological occurrence involving semantically relevant factors that, although they can be related for theoretical purposes within a purely formal structure, are not themselves purely formal. We do not always literally have to haul up a hapless pooch before language users seeking to understand the exact reference of his name, but in one way or another we must go outside of language in order to explain how language functions if we are to avoid vicious circularity or infinite regress. Metaphorically, however, and in other ways dependent on these burlesques of explaining the reference of a name to someone who does not already understand its meaning, we try in numerous ways to convey an explanation of what the name means by somehow or other, sometimes under necessity in ingenious ways, always with the end in view of putting the inquirer in mind of the same object as that intended by the name's knowing user. We can describe this final act in the explanation of reference as one in which the one who is explaining the reference of a name and the one seeking or in any case in need of an explanation of the name's reference are brought together in a convergence of their intendings whereby both are induced to think about the same thing and to understand that it is this particular thing that the name names. We thereby solve the problem of explicating the meaning of idiolects and codes in which 'Fido' does not mean Fido at all, but something altogether different than anything otherwise named 'Fido', such as the spy who is expected to arrive.

The second explanatory requirement seems to be purely formal, but not the first. The first requirement, the alignment of at least two thinkers' intendings, is by definition a social phenomenon in a miniature language subcommunity. There are a number of socially well-entrenched tried and true kinds of practices that have evolved through their usefulness and a heavy dose of historical accident in our own highly integrated linguistic and extralinguistic culture, whereby we can try to get other thinking subjects to intend the same referents as we in using the same singular referring terms, to associate the name with the referent in the way that in the limiting and most uninteresting situations is formalized in repetitive disquotational semantic structures like <'Fido', Fido>, or the equivalent for sentential meaning.

If we allow semantic items like terms and referents to be correlated in an ordered set by virtue of a thinking subject's intending that the term refer to the referent, then we immediately acquire the semantic generality we seek. We further acknowledge the social framework needed to explain the complicated social interplay by virtue of which linguistic conventions historically arise and are culturally disseminated as a matter of shared intendings of the same referent by the same term type in a social linguistic community. We return again to the actual practices by which the meanings of terms are taught to children, newcomers to a language, and persons who for one reason or another are sometimes slow on the uptake in trying to understand the meaning of a word or sentence.

What do we actually do in such situations? We pick up the dog, give a contextually uniquely identifying description, or whatever it takes, give the animal a gentle shake for emphasis while uttering his name, upon which the inquirer, hopefully, is enlightened and rightly satisfied in understanding the name's referent. It is a commonplace but decidedly social interchange in which in a relevant respect we try to get at least two thinkers to think alike, or at least to think they think alike. The means by which such social meetings of minds are achieved in explaining a name's reference to someone who does not yet already understand it are conditional on a social group's history of practical activities, and to that extent the details of how understanding of the reference of terms and truth conditions of sentences is disseminated are not of particular philosophical significance. What is of interest is that there must always exist mechanisms of one sort or another for getting multiple thinking subjects to intend

the same thing in using the same terms, and that the methods in question are dedicated to the unmistakably social phenomenon of enabling two or more thinkers gaining thereby at least some competence in a common language to intend the same thing as the referent of a name or truth conditions of a sentence whose meaning had otherwise remained elusive to the uninitiated. It is only practically in some such fashion that language is learned, transmitted, shared meanings are unpacked, interpreted and explicated, referential ambiguities and other kinds of linguistic and semantic confusions clarified and resolved, and ideas communicated by means of language from thinker to thinker.

Language is a social artifact for the expression and communication of the intentions of thought, of the mind's ideas, from one mind to another as the meaning of a name is spread among the members of a linguistic community. When the dissemination of referential and sentential meaning proceeds properly there is a succession of alignments of the intentions of large numbers of language users that converge on the same intended objects when they use the same names referentially. This is *meaning*, and what it is to share in an understanding of the referential meaning of a sentence or singular term. Consider only what we take to be the referents of the following proper names and what happens when we go from not understanding to grasping their meanings: 'Socrates', 'Pegasus', 'World War II', 'insouciance', 'recursively enumerable'. Ask also what is needed to share the meanings of these words with someone who does not already know what they mean, how we teach students in classes and children at home, and whether this is not all obviously on reflection a social enterprise through and through that has at best an independently interesting underlying formal structure, a skeleton, so to speak, upholding the living breathing thinking social organic thing that constitutes a language in which meanings are expressed.

The process and its goal at every stage and at every level is, shall we say, pragmatically juicy; it is complicatedly psychologically and sociologically contentful. It is explanatorily fruitful, moreover, precisely for that very reason. For two minds to intend the same thing is ineluctably an interpersonal phenomenon, and for such thinkers to arrive at intentional convergence, to bring them to this point, is inexplicable even in the most abstract philosophical semantics except in intentional terms. The question whether and if so how we can ever come to know that two minds are intending the same thing is another, epistemic, question that we shall not here fully brave. Suffice it for the moment to say that the intentional semantic model does not need to answer all epistemic questions, but that it is gratifying to see that the theory admits of a large choice of practical tests whereby agreement in intentions can be defeasibly determined, checked for agreement in terms of their consequences and associated actions as a matter both of probabilistic and pragmatic judgment. We can know that we have rightly evaluated another thinker's referential and truth conditional intentions as an hypothesis by virtue of its success or failure in achieving other related purposes, as two speakers inch closer to cointentionality in understanding one another's meaning. An instructive paradigm case is when two persons use language to set a lunch date and then do (or do not) actually meet at the agreed place at the agreed time, when desires and expectations are thereby satisfied or frustrated.

We can usually tell when we have brought another to understand our intentions, and to intend them ourselves, even if we do not necessarily intend in the same way or with the same beliefs and other cognitive and emotional attitudes. We share our meanings with others, from a third person point of view, and we know what it feels like when another thinker has gotten through to us and enabled us to share in their intention in grasping the reference of a name and the meaning or truth conditions of a declarative sentence. There is a flash of insight, metaphorically speaking, when we say to ourselves with respect to learning the meaning of a word we previously did not understand, Ah, *this* (or *that*) is what it means! Nor do these psychological and sociological trimmings bog down the real purely formal semantic engine in the philosophical explanation of meaning; they are instead the indispensable intentional, psychological and social heart and soul of reference and sentential meaning.

As an analogy, consider the complex social machinery at work in playing the party game charades. A player has a meaning to convey, the name of a person or a famous book or movie, which has to be communicated indirectly without using words but only social conventions governing a limited set of hand gestures and facial expressions. The object of the game, from an intentional semantic perspective, is roughly the same as in trying to teach another person, a child, say, or a foreigner, the meaning of a name. The task in both cases is to bring at least two thinking subjects into alignment in intending precisely the same thing. It can be a trudging process to get some charades players to share the same word-object intention as the person who knows but is not supposed to simply blurt out the intended referent's name. The player pulls on an ear and points to things at hand whose names sound like parts of the name or phrase the others are trying to guess, until the whole title is pronounced. At

the exact moment that the player succeeds, all together should ideally be intending albeit in different ways the same person, book or movie title. It is not surprising that charades offers an insightful model for teaching the meaning of a singular term or declarative sentence, since the game is in fact the challenge of teaching by nonverbally communicating an understanding of a name and of getting others socially to share in the undisclosed word or phrase and to intend the same referent as what had previously only been known in secret by a designated player. In that limited respect, all language teaching is semantically exactly like charades; both activities involve trying to bring two or more persons to intend the same thing by the appropriate use of a linguistic term, a word or sentence, as converging intentionally from mind to mind on a specific referent.⁷

There must be agreement in the intentions of many minds on the things intended by referential uses of the same name or sentence that spreads throughout a linguistic community as meanings are invented and adopted by language users, and as language is taught and new users are assimilated into its culture. Reference and sentential meaning cannot occur in an abstract formal social-psychological vacuum, but only in a context of thinking and social interaction; not in the arid formal structures of pure logic and set theory considered only in themselves, but in the thoughts of living intending subjects and the social groups to which they belong and in which they participate linguistically and in countless other ways. The more we try to ignore these basic facts in philosophy of language, the longer we retreat from the requirements of a genuinely intentional semantics to the over-simplifications of a purely formal semantics, the longer we deprive semantic theory of the possibility of providing an adequate explanation of even so elementary a semantic phenomenon as the reference of proper names.

Formal Relations of Collective Intentionality

To represent social intendings, we need only a notational method of distinguishing between different intending subjects. It follows that the underlying logic of social or collective intentionality is nothing other than conjunction, providing a streamlined analysis for the theory of collective intentionality in the theory of meaning. We can then write, for the explicit social dimension of intentional reference and sentential meaning and truth conditions, for multiple intending subjects who intend the same referent by the same term, where $s \neq s'$, and $\neg \forall [t = t' \wedge m = m']$:

(3.1) Conjunctive Analysis of Collective Intentionality

in Intentional Referential Semantics:

$$s, s' [\int t m s < T_{L_S}, R > \square \int t' m' s' < T_{L_{S'}}, R >]$$

(3.2) Conjunctive Analysis of Collective Intentionality in Intentional Sentential

Semantics:

$$s, s' [\int t m s < [p]_{L_S, S'}, A > \square \int t' m' s' < [p]_{L_{S'}, S'}, A >] \rightarrow [\text{TRUE}_{L_S, S'} [p]_{L_S, S'} \leftrightarrow A]$$

We require of cointentionality for shared reference or sentential truth conditions only that there be at least two intending subjects who intend the same referent by means of the same linguistic term, or the same state of affairs in the intentional analysis of the truth conditions for declarative sentences. We do not require and ordinarily do not expect that different intending subjects will ever intend the same object referent or state of affairs at the same time or in precisely the same manner. In a sufficiently complete and specific account of the manners of intending this conclusion follows analytically by definition.

Thus, I can refer to the same thing by means of the word 'London' as Dickens when I read and understand the meanings expressed in his novels, even though I do not intend the same referent *at the same time*, Dickens having died before I was born. I can nevertheless recover meaning from what Dickens writes in a common language, which we might call $L_{d,a}$ (the sufficiently overlapping historically evolving version of English that both Dickens and the author understand, and in which, counterfactually, we would presumably be able more or less effectively to communicate if contrary to fact we were to encounter one another at the same time), if we can both intend the same referent, London, by the use of the same term 'London'; similarly in nondeflationary nondisquotational applications and in the case of socially shared truth conditions for declarative sentences. Or, to take a nondisquotational example, Dickens and the author can referentially mean the very same thing when either uses the definitely descriptive phrase 'the capital city of England' to refer to London, or by the French word

'Londres', to designate alike the same British metropolis, as in Saul A. Kripke's belief puzzle; or, to adapt Frege's famous example, if either of us uses the singular referring terms 'the evening star' and 'the morning star' to refer to the same solar planet Venus.⁸

Naturally, we expect the conjunctions of collective intentions in intentional semantics to involve many more than two intending subjects mapping the same linguistic items onto the same referents in the case of the meanings of singular referring terms, or states of affairs in the case of the meanings of declarative sentences. For the minimal purposes of communication, no more than two intending subjects in agreement on their referential or other expressive intentions are necessary, and those two need not even intend to refer or represent the same things or states of affairs at the same time or in anything like the same manner. From an anthropological standpoint, it is more probably true that language arises from complex interactions among larger communities of intending subjects sharing what Wittgenstein describes as a common praxeological *form of life*, by means of which the point and purpose of linguistic activities can support social rules for using language. The logical requirements for a genuinely intentional semantics, even on Wittgenstein's conception, in the miniature societies of builders and their helpers or grocery store owners and apple shoppers that he presents as language games in *Philosophical Investigations*, need involve no more than a small handful of two or so intending subjects mapping the same words onto the same referents and the same sentences onto the same states of affairs.⁹ Where two or three language users are 'gathered' together, however historically or geographically divided, by virtue of their semantic cointendings, there we can hope to find socially instituted linguistic conventions. We know from experience, moreover, that there can be highly localized idiolects in which meanings are shared exclusively among the members of a family, say, or a single household, that are not generally understood by outsiders unless or until they are initiated into their specialized idiosyncratic linguistic practices. It is in this way that language grows and historically adds new words and sentences to its vocabularies, from modest beginnings that spread throughout a larger linguistic community in much the way that Kripke in his lectures on *Naming and Necessity*.¹⁰

While two or more language using subjects may but need not intend the same referent by the same term at precisely the same time, we do not imagine that two or more language users can ever refer to the same object by the same term in *precisely the same manner* at the same time. More needs to be said about the logic of ways in which reference and truth conditions can be intended. We cannot enter deeply into this extensive topic, which deserves a separate investigation leading to a theory of its own. For present purposes, we need take notice only of the adverbial qualifications of intending in order to explain personal connotations, irony, differential grasp of Fregean *Sinne* or senses of referring and declarative expressions, as well as what Frege refers to in '*Über Sinn und Bedeutung*' as the poetic 'coloring' of language at the 'third level' of meaning, along with other nonreferential aspects of meaning that Frege regarded as beyond the reach of a properly scientific purely extensional nonpsychological semantics.¹¹ Even if multiple intending subjects can never intend referents and states of affairs in precisely the same manner, it is worthwhile to hold out the concept of an indistinguishable convergence by which two or more language users come to agree exactly in all aspects of meaning when they intend the same referent or truth conditions by use of the same term or declarative sentence. The theory then projects a practically unattainable ideal of exact agreement of meaning and of the understanding of meaning by multiple language users in the same linguistic community.¹²

Thus, Dickens and the author might both unequivocally refer to London at different times by the proper name 'London' or the definite description 'the capital city of England', but the terms assuredly do not in every sense *mean* precisely the same thing to Dickens and the author. The terms in an intuitive fashion are more meaningful in a semantically relevant sense to Dickens, who actually lived there and knew the city more intimately than the author, who has only visited on a few occasions. Dickens is also likely to associate different related ideas with London than the author, since each will have experienced the city in different ways and from different perspectives, and, since we are dealing in this case with nonoverlapping times of referring intendings, one is likely to think of the city at a different stage of its historical development than the other, or in terms of places in and properties of the city that no longer exist or did not then exist as part of what each means in thinking about London. To the extent and to the degree that two different language users approach the ideal of exact convergence of the manner of intending a referent or state of affairs, to that extent their meanings and understanding of one another's meanings can be said more completely to agree. To fully understand another person's meaning in this strong sense is surely impossible in practice. In the abstract, the idea sets a goal for perfect interpersonal communication that we may work toward to approximate. I might try to better comprehend what Dickens means by 'London' by undertaking certain efforts vicariously to bring my manner of intending the same city by my continued use of the name as close as possible to Dick-

ens's. I can do this, for example, among other limitedly effective ways, by consulting maps of the city as they existed in Dickens's day, by spending time in the same parts of the city that Dickens would have known, perhaps visiting or even living in the same buildings that he lived in, if they happen still to exist, reading other authors that Dickens would have read concerning the history and character of the city, and the like.

When I do these things, it seems reasonable to believe that I improve my understanding of what Dickens (nonreferentially) *means* by 'London', of the London that he and I can both designate unequivocally when we use the city's name referentially. Fortunately, the elusiveness of intending the same referents or states of affairs by the same referring terms or declarative sentences in precisely the same manner or adverbially in precisely the same way, of fully understanding another intending subject in every respect, does not preclude language from working within pragmatic limitations effectively enough for all of the usual purposes of expressing and communicating meaning. It is good enough for jazz, good enough for government work, to intend the same thing as another speaker, referential object or state of affairs, by the referential use of a term or sentence. In this way, I come to understand what another person means, even if I cannot know every aspect of another's meaning in all its complex semantic dimensions. I can try to do so by duplicating in my own grasp of the term or sentence precisely all the same connotations and implications, background information and Fregean third-level poetic coloring that contribute to a subject's exact meaning, which an intentional semantic theory interprets as a result of intending the same referent or state of affairs in precisely the same manner. Nor can Dickens mean by the use of the name 'London' absolutely everything in his time that could be intended as part of the extra-referential meaning of the word. Meaning in the appropriate sense is inexhaustible, as inexhaustible as the possibilities of understanding the unlimitedly many different facts from unlimitedly many different epistemic and subjective emotional experiential perspectives of as many different thinking subjects as may choose to communicate in language about the same things.

We should take heart in these facts about the potentially unlimited depths of meaning. Hermeneuticists have long argued that the meanings of even the simplest apparently most transparent texts can in principle provide the basis for unlimited study and reflection. Professional archaeologists often deliberately refrain from completely excavating a dig site, partly in order to preserve work for future generations, and partly in order to delay study for another time when improved scientific methods will help to answer more questions about an historical place and its buried artifacts than they can fully investigate today. In semantic analysis, by contrast, there is never a need to limit inquiry in this way, because we know in advance that no matter how hard we try we can never exhaust the meanings inherent in a text, and that future readers and thinkers will bring a different perspective from which to discover new and previously unappreciated meanings, while perhaps losing sight of others, as a consequence of the implicit assumption that linguistic meanings are indeed literally inexhaustible. If we know more about the meanings expressed in Homer's *Iliad* than George Chapman did when he first translated the epic poem into English in 1598, it is partly because of Chapman's contributions to the project of recovering meanings from the text on which later interpreters can build or against which they can react, but also partly because of what we have learned about Troy and ancient Greece in other fields of knowledge, notably archaeology, through the extra-semantic but semantically relevant work of Sir Arthur Evans and others. Semantic holists in this regard will insist that every additional scrap of information, even if it is not obviously immediately relevant to the interpretation at hand, adds to the potential for recovering meanings from even the most familiar and painstakingly examined text. Consider the difference in the meanings derived from a playscript when a young scholar reads or attends a performance of *King Lear* as a highschool student and then later in life after having three daughters move out of the house and being committed to a nursing home. We ordinarily, and, according to intentional semantics, quite rightly say in such circumstances that the play has acquired more or in any case a new and different *meaning* for the reader.¹³

If we define the identity conditions for the exact manner in which a subject intends an object or state of affairs as including the precise spatio-temporal circumstances in which such intendings take place, then not even Siamese twins are capable of intending the same things by their use of the same linguistic entities in the very same manner. This fact involving the most specific standards for the identity of meaning in all its semantically relevant aspects by two or more language users is further exploited in formalizing an intentional theory of philosophical psychology and developing some of its consequences in light of intentional semantics, for the sake of explicating the theoretical connections between philosophy of mind and philosophy of language in a theory of meaning as the expression of thought.^{14, 15}

NOTES

¹Searle 1983. The theory of intentionality in philosophy of mind, and, by extension, philosophy of language, originates with Aristotle, Ockham, Reid, and others, and was most notably revived in modern philosophy by Brentano [1874] 1973. Intentional semantics today is a thriving business and the literature is vast.

²Note the inadequacy of writing subjects and intendings into a semantic structure $\langle s, l, t, m, 'T', R \rangle$. This does not do justice to the intentionality of intending, because it lacks the required articulation by which a subject in intending a referent by a term stands in relation to the referent by means of the term. The intentional formulation adopted here, $s \int m_s \langle 'T', L_s, R \rangle$, suggests unnaturally but is not meant to be understood as implying that the subject intends an ordered set. It is offered for convenience of comparison with the disquotational theory of reference, where it expresses a subject's intending the second item or referent in the ordered set by the first item or term; similarly for the intentional formalization of sentential meaning. The proposal avoids the objection originally owing to Platts 1975, that combining an intentional theory of meaning with a truth conditional theory requires fixing the meaning of infinitely many sentences despite not being in possession of infinite knowledge of infinitely many intentions. See also Davies 1981 and Loar 1981. The solution is merely to recognize that according to the theory there exists such an intention for every actual sentence use, and that in many instances interpreters of language trying to recover meaning will not know what these intentions are or will attribute the wrong intentions to a language user, thereby falling short of an exact or correct interpretation. The fact that indefinitely many sentences can be constructed recursively and combinatorially from the total resources of a syntax and grammar (or formation rules in the case of a formalized language) on the present account by itself does not yet confer meaning on any such construction unless or until it is actually intended by a language user. It is only the actually meaningful uses of sentences whose meaning needs to be explained by an adequate philosophical semantics.

³Thus, we explain disquotation as a special case of a general semantic theory, rather than as the best that a theory can do. We thereby avoid circularity and provide an account that includes the use of an arbitrary term to designate an arbitrary referent, and an arbitrary sentence to designate an arbitrary state of affairs as the sentence's truth conditions. It is only by this level of generality that a semantics can hope to do justice to eccentric and idiosyncratic uses of languages like secret codes.

⁴Searle 1995, 24.

⁵See Tuomela 1995; 2002; Tuomela and Miller 1988.

⁶Searle would probably agree that these difficulties are implied by Tuomela's doxastic iteration reduction of collective to individual intentionality, which he would in turn offer as a reason for rejecting the analysis. I on the contrary find the objections to be so obvious that I think they should make us reconsider in the first place whether the iterative account is the most reasonable way of trying to understand collective intentionality as arising out of or as a function of the sum of individually intentional mental acts, or whether there is another type of reduction that does not suffer from this defect.

⁷Many semantic theories pay lip service to the need for pragmatics, but still relegate it to a place of secondary importance as something distinct from semantics properly so-called. Davidson, for example, does this in 'Belief and the Basis of Meaning', 1974, when he writes, 143: 'There can be nothing wrong, of course, with the methodological maxim that when baffling problems about meanings, reference, synonymy, and so on arises, we should remember that these concepts, like those of word, sentence, and language themselves, abstract away from the social transactions and setting which give them what content they have. Everyday linguistic and semantic concepts are part of an intuitive theory for organizing more primitive data, so only confusion can result from treating these concepts and their supposed objects as if they had a life of their own. But this observation cannot answer the question how we know when an interpretation of an utterance is correct...I have my doubts about the possibility of *defining* linguistic meaning in terms of non-linguistic intentions and beliefs...'. An encouraging opposing trend is represented by Gabbay and Woods 2003. A more profound appreciation for the importance of pragmatic factors in understanding meaning is evinced by Davidson in 1974; 1986. Again, we are focusing here only on the purely formal component of Davidson's theory of truth as a basis for his theory of the interpretation of the meaning of sentences.

⁸Frege 1970; 1972; Kripke 1979. See Linsky 1983, 12: "It is interesting that Frege does not give even a hypothetical example of two names with the *same* sense. Indeed, I do not think that many can

be found if we insist on confining ourselves to a single language. But, if this restriction is removed, there is an abundance: 'London' and 'Londra' (in Italian)."

⁹Wittgenstein 1957 §§ 1; 2, 5-8, 21; and *passim*.

¹⁰Kripke 1980.

¹¹Frege 1970, 60-61.

¹²The unattainability of perfect agreement in all dimensions of meaning does not discredit a semantic theory that holds out the possibility as an ideal. It is only in this way that an account of meaning can do justice to pre-analytic beliefs about the inexhaustibility of meaning in conversational interactions and interpretations of texts, and concerning the seemingly unlimited degrees of approximation to exact fit of meaning and understanding another thinker and language user that we project from instances in which we improve our understanding incrementally or in some cases by leaps and bounds in trying to grasp another person's meaning. It is no pun, equivocation, or semantic accident that different types of experience or accumulation of related information can often bring us closer to the *meaning* of a use of language that we had previously only dimly understood.

¹³An example is Gadamer 1995, 24, 280-292. Gadamer seems to attribute the inexhaustibility of interpretation (*Verstehen*) to an implicit Schopenhauerian inexhaustibility of desire.

¹⁴See Rescher 1997, 67-68, on the 'experiential contextualism of rationality'.

¹⁵I am grateful to the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIAS), Royal Academy of the Arts and Sciences (KNAW) for support of this and related research projects in philosophical logic, semantics, and philosophy of mathematics in 2005-2006.

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