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Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer (ed.)

The Pragmatics of *Making it Explicit*

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The Pragmatics of *Making it Explicit*
Edited by Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer

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The Pragmatics of *Making it Explicit*

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Introduction

Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer

Some books set standards by developing new perspectives on a whole field of knowledge, thinking, and research. Robert Brandom's *Making it Explicit* (1994) does precisely this. It marks a change in philosophical semantics insofar as it turns away from the widespread idea to analyze concepts as truth-value functions (or sortal classifications) on a given domain. As a result, philosophical analysis has to do more than to reconstruct the corresponding functions on different levels in a merely formal, in the end set theoretical, semantic model. Brandom shows, that in semantics we better start with (material) inferences, or rather, with the normative statuses and roles of entitlements and discursive commitments to such (material) inferences. As a result, the content of an assertive speech act consists in the role the assertion plays in a language game of giving reasons for certain (assertions and) inferences to the hearer, and of answering questions, when we are asked to support previous assertions by reasons. This means that assertions are especially important speech acts; and the discursive practice of drawing material inferences and asking for reasons plays a fundamental role for the semantics of sentences, not the other way round. That is, the content of sentences and their (logical) 'parts', the names, predicates and other words, consists in their contribution to the normative proprieties when using the sentence in real dialogues. Other speech acts presuppose the corresponding forms and norms of assertions. Therefore, they do not stand on equal footing with assertions – such that we cannot equally well start with imperatives, as a certain reading of Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations wants to have it. In other words, the discursive practice of asserting, asking for, and giving reasons plays a fundamental role in semantic analysis as a whole. Any formal semantics for sentences as syntactic constituents of assertions must be grounded on it. Moreover, any proper understanding of the peculiar conceptual faculties of man, i.e., of human sapience in contradistinction to merely animal sentience, rests on the social normativity of our discursive practice. Insofar, Brandom's inferentialist semantics defends with good reasons the primacy of the philosophy of language with respect to any serious philosophy of mind.

In this vein, Brandom gives a comprehensive systematic account of the structural lessons we have to draw from Wittgenstein's pragmatic turn of philosophical semantics. The basic lesson is this: Any appropriate analysis of human cognition and rationality has to explain linguistic competence in the context of already given forms of communicative and cooperative interactions between persons, i.e., in the context of normative pragmatics. This means that in comparison to the usual 'Carnapian' idea of philosophical and linguistic pragmatics, the order of analysis has to be reversed. For Carnap, as for Morris and later for Chomsky, syntax is basic. It defines well-formed configurations of words in sentences of a language. Semantics is a set of rules articulating formally valid inferences on the level of sentences, taken as types. Pragmatics follows in the sense of explicating special rules of language use. Austin, Searle, and Grice, to name just a few, investigate this pragmatic dimension with respect to different performative types of utterances, and articulate rules for interpreting communicative intentions of individual speakers (as tokens). According to this traditional picture, the pragmatic rules that govern individual language use already presuppose semantic rules of valid inference, which define the 'literal meaning' of syntactically individuated assertive sentences.

Another problematic order of analysis starts with a presupposed individual faculty to generate and recognize syntactic forms and semantic content. This faculty is 'explained', then, by theoretical assumptions about the phylogenetic and ontogenetic explanations of how the individual faculty as a kind of cognitive behavior came into being. The behavioral and brain sciences develop corresponding explanations by assuming a kind of learning device for acquiring and performing syntactic competence (Chomsky), talk about a semantic language of thought (Fodor) or use a framework of radical interpretation (Davidson). Others refer to a more or less vaguely defined biological functionality of regular behavior. But how far reaching are explanation of these forms? And what do they already presuppose?

A central question concerns the very concept of a rule. What is it to follow a rule actively or to (try to) act according to a norm that defines the propriety of the action in question? Brandom takes up an insight from Wittgenstein when he says that by expressing rules by special symbols or articulating them by (implicative) sentences we (can) make practical ways or norms of correct inference explicit. And we assess this by special acts of scorekeeping in which we check the fulfillment of commitments and the granted entitlements in dialogues. Such a dialogue is an actualization of a discursive practice. As a result, we must distinguish rule following from all merely dispositional (regularist) faculties of behaving in such a way that *we* may say that the behavior conforms to a certain rule. Another problem refers to the status of intentionality (Searle and many others), its (allegedly) biological basis and the faculty of having well-determined intentions. The task of a

critical philosophical anthropology is to give a *differential* account of what can be explained in biological language and by biological methods, and what goes beyond the scope of this form of explanations, as, for example, the peculiar normativity of commitments in joint human actions, including speech acts. Brandom's approach takes care of this without mystifying the norms. And he shows that the very possibility of having well-determined (communicative) intentions presupposes a specific form of human intentionality and, as such, a specific form of human cognition, guided by communication: intentions are normative statuses.

Sapience surpasses merely animal sentience and individual or social dispositions of animals by virtue of the faculty of proper language use. Speaking a language is engaging in a norm-governed form of social practice, not (just) in a rule-governed form of behavior, as Quine or Searle have it. Since a rule, like an implicative sentence, must be understood as making implicit (social) norms of proper understanding and correct inference explicit, no assumed rule 'in the brain' can 'explain' actions according to these norms or inferential proprieties in linguistic communication. As a result, the cognitive turn in linguistic analysis after the 'Chomskyan revolution' can be misleading, at least if we overestimate the analogy to hardwired rules in a computer or a robot. Brandom's approach shows in any case that an appropriate analysis of truth and meaning must start with, and not abstract from, the structurally 'dialogical' form in which we express or propose truth-claims (Rorty). This takes place in a context of giving and asking for reasons (Sellars): In assertions, a speaker implicitly gives the hearer reasons for certain theoretical or practical inferences. When the hearer asks for reasons, she asks for making (some of) these reasons explicit.

The aim of this volume is to present key ideas of Brandom's philosophy of *Making it Explicit* not as a final result of a closed argumentation but as a thought-provoking criticism of entrenched assumptions about the relation between (linguistic) pragmatics and (human) cognition, as a target for objections and, of course, as a point of departure for further developments.

Some of the contributions provide a general context, placing Brandom's inferentialism in a large historical and systematic development, for example Frege's and Wittgenstein's logico-linguistic turn against metaphysical Platonism and naïve representationalism (Stekeler) or a more contemporary debate about how we acquire linguistic compentence (Peregrin). Peregrin suggests that already Chomsky and, subsequently, many modern linguists demand a kind of toolbox theory of language use. But they do not really offer a fitting theory of meaning, based on implicit rules of inference, which is precisely what Brandom does. For Stekeler, too, there is in some respects less revolution than continuation. For example, the alleged 'picture theory' in Wittgenstein's (1921) *Tractatus* has never

been representationalist in Brandom's (or Rorty's) sense at all. What is interesting in Brandom's approach is not so much the (rather well established) idea that conceptual content has to be understood in the context of use, but his normativist and, at the same time, perspectival and cooperative account of proprieties of inference in terms of mutual commitments and entitlements in linguistic discourse.

Millikan compares Brandom's account with her own, focussing on similarities and differences between authors influenced by Sellars. She observes that Brandom talks about practice instead of social behavior, and suspects that his normative approach is rather mystifying, at least if compared to a more 'naturalist' and 'functionalist' explanation. Knell brings to the fore new aspects of deflationism in Brandom's work, namely with respect to intentionality. Rödl compares and contrasts Frege's and Brandom's 'mathematical' theory of predication conceived as applying a function in terms of an argument with Kant's approach. An appropriate analysis of the logical relations between different *copulae* (like *is P/was P*) could make basic revisions of Brandom's inferentialist approach necessary – such that Brandom's claim that formal, i.e., Fregean, logic is 'the' organon of semantic self-consciousness becomes questionable, as McDowell also points out. We may use Fregean logic in order to make implicit norms of *mathematical* inference explicit, but we have to see the limits of (analogically or metaphorically) applying it to natural languages and judgements having empirical content. In fact, we use completely different schemes for controlling the conceptual proprieties of inferences from empirical assertions, for example in cases where the time-structure of ongoing processes is relevant.

Kambartel distinguishes a kind of Sunday-school pragmatism from two versions of radical pragmatism, philosophical constructivism and Brandom's form of inferentialism. Both are anti-metaphysical endeavors to reconstruct the symbolic and cognitive structures of our life as (forms of) human activities, guided by institutional or social norms. Constructivism reminds us that not only in philosophy problems of articulation and understanding, of communication and cooperation are often solved by new constructions, not by appealing to an already given set of reasons or by making implicit norms explicit. We may use analogical constructions for clarification, propose new definitions, conventions, or even whole institutions. Taking this into account, many justifications cannot be understood as the application of pre-given inferential schemes. Whereas Kambartel probably would not object to theoretical constructions if their purpose is a complex argument against mentalist or naturalist theories of human reason, McDowell is not at ease with the very idea that a 'traditional' order of explanation – from truth and representation to inference and substitution – has to be reversed at all. Moreover, if such an analysis starts with a general concept of proper transitions between moves in a cooperative practice, controlled by a parallel practice of deontic scorekeeping, we

would still need an explanation of the peculiarity of assertive speech acts together with corresponding (commitment or entitlement preserving) inferences.

No matter how a dialogical game of deontic scorekeeping may work, the question arises where, and how, the 'norms' of playing this game may properly be thought to 'exist.' Merely contingent sanctions against what is held to be inappropriate cannot define proprieties, not even sanctioning behavior in whole we-groups. Therefore, Laurier and Grönert worry how Brandom's theory of propositional content can make sense of the 'objective existence' of intrinsically implicit rules or norms of proper inference at all. How can a phenomenalist approach to normativity, according to which normative statuses must be understood as being instituted by practical normative attitudes, avoid the collapse into social behaviorism? Penco begins with some exposition-and-appreciation, but closes with some large-scale, important criticisms: How should we understand Brandom's talk about social norms of inference? Do they include all kinds of generic norms for proper language-entry and language-exit moves in linguistic discourse? How do these norms 'exist', if we make an implicit or explicit appeal to them? Scharp's paper offers an extension of the apparatus, following some ideas of Joseph Camp, in order to incorporate somehow defective, confused, linguistic acts or general semantic features like vagueness.

Bob Brandom's responses are most valuable contributions, especially because they show how ascriptions of opinions and judgments can be corrected even though no one has the last word in scorekeeping.

Formal truth and objective reference in an inferentialist setting

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The project of developing a pragmatic theory of meaning aims at an anti-metaphysical, therefore anti-representationalist and anti-subjectivist, analysis of truth and reference. In order to understand this project we have to remember the turns or twists given to Frege's and Wittgenstein's original idea of inferential semantics (with Kant and Hegel as predecessors) in later developments like formal axiomatic theories (Hilbert, Tarski, Carnap), regularist behaviorism (Quine), mental regulism and interpretationism (Chomsky, Davidson), social behaviorism (Sellars, Millikan), intentionalism (Grice), conventionalism (D. Lewis), justificational theories (Dummett, Lorenzen) and, finally, Brandom's normative pragmatics.

Keywords: Absolute truth, cooperative practice, explicit rule, idealization, implicit norm, material inference, Platonism, pragmatic foundation of semantics, regulism, regularism.

1. A short introduction to inferentialism: From Carnap via Frege to Brandom

In a sense, Carnap's (1928) *Aufbau* together with his (1937) *Logical Syntax of Language* present the core idea of inferential semantics in a formalist setting. The basic model is Hilbert's concept of implicit definitions.[1] Here, the 'meaning' of words is given in terms of their deductive use, their roles in a holistic axiomatic theory. Even the 'realm' of objects we talk about is, allegedly, defined by the use of variables in quantificational deductions, governed by axioms. Quine's famous catch-phrase "to be is to be a value of a variable" (i.e., a possible evaluation of quantifiers) is to be read accordingly. The idea is that in such an approach any metaphysical or Platonist correspondence theory of meaning and truth at least inside mathematics proves to be superfluous and, hence, can be overcome.

A standard example of this approach is axiomatic set theory. Allegedly, it implicitly defines the concept and realm of 'pure' sets, and, by the same token, *the whole ontology of purely mathematical objects*. It does this on the basis of first order predicate calculus as a system of rules for logical deductions. A system of axioms 'defines' the 'realm of sets' — together with the element relation between sets — 'implicitly', namely by fixing (some) formal inferences between (logically atomic and complex) sentences of the corresponding formal language.

Since formal deductions are merely syntactic transformations, axiomatic theories are purely syntactic. Alfred Tarski has introduced into this picture a kind of *formal semantics* by raising the question under which conditions we can enlarge an axiomatic theory T and turn it into a theory T* such that in T* we can deduce the following 'Tarski-biconditional' for any T-sentence S (Tarski 1935: 305–306):

> "N(S) is true if and only if S".

The usual example for this biconditional is:

> "'Snow is white' is true if and only if snow is white".

The operation N turns sentences S belonging to the axiomatic system T into names N(S) belonging to the axiomatic system T*. T* should contain a kind of 'truth-predicate' of the form "x is true", or, as it turns out when one reflects on things in detail, a satisfaction relation of the following form (Tarski 1935: 307–311):

> "The formula S(x,y…) is satisfied by an infinite sequence of objects".

If we have found such a T*, we have arrived at a kind of '*deflationist* truth-definition' for T. If all goes well, T* is a conservative extension of T. It is a 'meta-theory' with respect to T only insofar as it allows for '*pro-sentential*' names and variables and the corresponding 'meta-predicates' like "is true". Obviously, if T is inconsistent, T* is inconsistent. The paradox of the liar (in its appropriate application) shows why T is inconsistent in (almost) all cases in which we try to set T = T*. We may forget all the details if only we remember this result: Tarski's formal semantics is defined in Hilbertian terms by the methods of implicit axiomatic definitions, i.e. it is part of a *merely logical syntax* of formal languages.

Usually, the adherents of implicit definitions in Hilbert-style axiomatic theories view the older, Fregean, approach to *truth-conditional semantics* as too close to a Platonist correspondence theory of truth and reference. This diagnosis leads to the formalist (i.e., syntacticist and axiomaticist) revisions in Hilbert's and Carnap's approach as sketched above. But, as we shall see, it is erroneous, even though some of Frege's (1879) remarks might be misleading and his idea of truth conditional *logicism* fails in view of Russell's paradox.

Whereas Frege had merely reflected on the logical constitution of mathematical objects and truths, the early Wittgenstein had already turned to 'pragmatic' considerations of the peculiar *use* we make of sentence that are formally declared as 'true' and to the mediating function of 'logically elementary' sentences for the 'projection' of 'logically complex' sentences to 'the world', namely via a kind of conceptually pre-formed perception or intuition,[2] as I shall try to show below. The early Wittgenstein develops a 'transcendental' analysis of the very possibility of representing objective 'states of affairs' by symbolic or linguistic forms — in the wake of his early insight that *representing is a social practice*. Later this pragmatic turn of semantics leads to behaviorist, conventionalist, intentionalist, cognitivist, social and normative theories, from Carnap to Quine, Sellars, Davidson, and, finally, to Brandom. All these approaches can or even should be classified despite their differences in details as belonging to one and the same movement, held together by the *joint idea of inferential semantics and pragmatics*. One of the leading questions in the following reconstruction of this development is, therefore: What are the reasons for the differences in this joint movement? Are they essential or mere differences of presentation? Which of the controversial claims are results of mutual misunderstandings, which are due to dogmatic positions, which are answers to real problems? The basic question, however, is this: How can we transfer the ideas and arguments that were developed for an analysis of the constitution of mathematics, its abstract entities and formal truths, to languages in which we *talk about objective things* in the real world and in which we *do things* in joint communication and cooperative actions?

2. From mathematical sentences to empirical statements

2.1 Content, sense, and reference

Frege's truth-conditional semantics was designed for a special purpose, the analysis of the language of (higher) arithmetics and pure set theory. The task was to make not only the possibility of *knowledge* about abstract objects explicit but to clarify their very *mode of existence*. At first sight, Frege's language design may not look very much inferentialist, but rather representationalist. We should notice, however, that from the beginning Frege (1879) wanted to determine the *content* of a (logically complex) mathematical sentence only *in terms of its inferential impact*, i.e., with respect to how the sentence *follows logically* from other sentences and how other sentences follow from it.[3] In fact, we can understand Fregean truth-value semantics as a form of inferential semantics, as we shall see below.[4] The problem is, however, that Frege was not too clear about how the truth-values of logically

elementary sentences are to be fixed. In any case, already according to Frege, talk about content or 'sense' of words and other parts of sentences is nothing but talk about their syncategorematic contribution to logical inferences.

It seems as if the *later Frege*, when identifying the reference (*Bedeutung*) of a namelike expression or 'singular term' with the object named, either must have abandoned inferentialism altogether or never was an inferentialist at all.[5] Moreover, Frege assumes that thoughts are, in a sense, independent of the particular way they are grasped or articulated. Nevertheless, abstract objects still do not exist outside *a system of possible denotations*. An analysis of what there is, therefore, turns into an analysis of what can be named or referred to by singular terms. The idea includes operations by which we turn variables into names or, for that matter, situation-dependent basic, i.e., not yet logically complex, denotations. It is crucial to see that such basic denotations do not have to be names in a purely syntactically defined system.[6] The same remark holds for 'thoughts': We can grasp thoughts only because, by necessity, they *can* be expressed by sentences or situation-dependent statements. Hence, according to Frege, the 'reference' (Bedeutung) of a singular term or denotation (like "the set of natural numbers" or "the number of chairs in this room") is *not* defined by an abstract entity which is *metaphysically presupposed to exist*, but by the following Leibniz-rule for possible names or terms:

> Two singular terms t and t* refer to the same object if and only if A(t*) follows from A(t) and A(t) follows form A(t*) for any relevant (first order) predicate or (extensional) 'context' A(x) (Frege 1879: 14; Stekeler-Weithofer 1986: 261, 288).

The Leibniz-rule just says that the system of (extensional) contexts does not lead, on the level of names or singular terms, to finer distinctions than the corresponding equality "=". A context or predicate C(x) is called "extensional" if it belongs to a system of contexts such that for the corresponding equality "=" the Leibniz-rule holds. Hence, to say that t* = t holds is just the same as to say that both, t and t*, refer to the same object. It just depends on our perspective of reflection whether we want to talk about the 'relation of equality' or whether we want to talk about the 'identity of objects referred to'. In the first case, we focus on 'meta-level relations' between terms. But when we focus on the realm of 'objects' we talk 'about', we say that an equality of the form t = t* says that t and t* refer to the same or identical 'entity' or 'object'.[7]

When speaking of equality or sameness there always is an implicit reference to the relevant extensional contexts C(x). That is, t = t* suffices to infer C(t) from C(t*) and C(t*) from C(t). This means, in turn, that C(x) belongs to *the* distinguished class of contexts *with respect to* "=". This class of contexts is usually presupposed as given. Hence, it is not in the power of the individual speaker to add at will new contexts or names. The mere wish to *create* an object by using a word as if it

were a singular term does not work. Saying so does not make it so. We cannot add without further ado, for example, fictitious solutions of $x^2 = -1$ to the real numbers in order to create the complex numbers. What we have to do is to define the truth-values for a whole system of new sentences in which the new terms occur. This, and only this, is the true reading of Frege's critique against what I would like to call *linguistic creationism*.

This criticism does not entail that Frege is a Platonist like, for example, Georg Cantor certainly was. A mathematical Platonist *presupposes* ontic realms of numbers and sets, meanings and thoughts as (pre-)given. A physicalist Platonist *presupposes* the existence of atomic particles and causal laws. A theological Platonist *presupposes* the existence of God or souls and assumes, therefore, without further ado that the meaning and reference of these words is well defined and clear. A cognitivist or intentionalist Platonist *presupposes* whole realms of mental events, intentions, pro-attitudes and beliefs without asking for the linguistic and pragmatic constitution of these 'things'. They all only ask how we can come to know or believe something about these things, not what it means to talk about such things. Therefore, 'critical' or even 'sceptical' epistemologies that want to explore the 'limits of our knowledge' as in the empiricist traditions of philosophy and in scientific theories of cognition are just not critical enough. The more radical critique in Frege's logical analysis lies in the fact that it makes Platonist or represenationalist belief in transcendent or mental objects impossible. At the same time, Frege avoids linguistic creationism and, hence, too radical versions of nominalism, too. One of the main features of Brandom's approach is his turn back to Frege.

According to Frege's differentiation between reference and sense, the 'sense' of a term or sentence is, in a way, no 'entity' we can talk about at all. It is rather the 'form' of using the term or the 'way' its meaning (reference) is determined. The reason for the logical fact that this talk about sense is not referential is this: There is no general rule for classifying two terms or sentences or predicates (contexts) as equivalent with respect to their sense. This means that the word "sense" functions as a kind of *free floating operator* with a hidden parameter for contexts (or predicates) in the following way: t and t* might be 'referentially equivalent' with respect to all *extensional contexts* (i.e. that $t = t^*$ holds); but we still might want to enlarge the system of contexts and add more fine-grained, *oblique* or *intensional* contexts C(x) such that C(t) does not entail C(t*) or C(t*) does not entail C(t). If the term t nevertheless can be replaced by t* *salva veritate* with respect to *all* such *new contexts C* and vice versa, then we can say that t and t* 'have equal sense'. Hence we see that the sense or 'intension' of a term (or of a sentence) tacitly depends on the presupposed context C, which is finer than those in a given system of 'extensional' contexts.[8]

This shows that the 'vagueness' or 'openness' in our talk about senses or intensions is nothing to be lamented about. It is part of the logical grammar for using expressions like "the sense of X" or "the intension of the expression X". Hence, there is no need for any 'flight from intensions' (Quine 1960: ch. 6) if only we understand what is meant when we say, for example, that the sense of 3 + 2 is different from 2 + 3 but equal to III + II. We say, then, that in the relevant contexts we distinguish adding 2 to 3 from adding 3 to 2; but we do not distinguish between different basic notations of 2 or 3. Of course, it is never settled in all generality what can be equal in sense (or 'intension') with respect to *contexts of belief*, because, formally speaking, I might believe that V = III + II is true, not knowing that 5 = 3 + 2 is true, for example when I do not know how to use arabic numerals. But when I say, for example, that I believe *of* the number V that *it* is equal to III + II, then *we* would say, most probably, that I believe as well *of* the number 5 that it is equal to 3 + 2. The reason is that we treat the context "believing of the number x that" as an 'extensional' context with respect to the equality of numbers.

But, of course, we should not presuppose sense and content, meaning and reference as mystical semantic entities. Nor should we presuppose an unexplained 'existence' of entities that can be referred to by name-like terms t. On the other hand, we do not have to dismiss these words if we keep in mind that talking about the meaning of a word or expression X presupposes two things: we need an appropriate system of contexts or predicates C(x) in which we can 'talk about meanings' and we need an appropriate equivalence relation of the form "X has the same meaning as Y". We always should *explain* the meaning as well as the reference of a term t by a method of abstraction — starting with its use in contexts C(t) in which t can occur. By doing so, we always have to distinguish *extensional contexts* that define the relevant 'relation' of equivalence, equality or 'identity' with respect to the relevant concept of 'reference'.

As a result of our considerations, we can see that there are no *absolute* extensional contexts and, hence, no absolute equalities or identities at all. What counts as an extensional context with respect to a certain equivalence relation may count as an intensional context with respect to some equality that is less fine-grained. For example, ratios m/n are equal if and only if n and m are equal; so the ratios are 'intensional' entities in comparison to rational numbers.[9] All these things were more or less clearly seen already by Frege and Wittgenstein.

But why, nevertheless, did Frege's logicism fail? Was it not his 'ontological' belief in a pregiven universe of possible first order dicourse, i.e., a universal realm of objects and extensional predicates or contexts? Indeed. Frege wanted to define the numbers as cardinal numbers, i.e. as certain sets or value-ranges, namely as sets of sets having the same cardinality. And he wanted to define sets as objects with a

peculiar property, in distinction, say, to Julius Caesar or the moon. This suggests that he already assumed a whole system of concrete and abstract objects as pre-existing. But his real mistake was to think that we could unify all well determined objects of reasonable discourse into one universe of discourse and keep them apart by defining predicates. He did not see the 'locality' in our constitution of a domain of objects or a realm of entities.[10] Such a realm is given or made explicit by presupposing or (re)constructing an appropriate system of proper names, equalities *and predicates* which fulfil the condition of consistency and extensionality (i.e., the Leibniz-law for the appropriate equalities). The consistency condition says that one and only one of two truth values is attached to any well defined sentence in or about the realm, namely by the defining criteria.

2.2 Sentences as rules and norms of using rules

In what follows I shall show how truth-evaluative semantic is a version of inferential semantics. It belongs to, and should not be separated from, a use-related analysis of meaning.

Language is a social art (Quine 1960: ix). It is a mastery of an enormously extended set of techniques of doing things with words. This is the pragmatic view shared, for example, by Wittgenstein, Quine, or Austin. But it can be misleading to characterize the realm of *semantics* proper as a system of *logical and conceptual inference-rules* and distinguish it, with Carnap, from 'pragmatics' as a system *of rules that governs language use in speech acts*. This differentiation of semantics and pragmatics is helpful only as long as we can separate 'semantic' schemes of inference and presuppositions on the level of *sentences* from inferential forms of dealing with *concrete speech acts* governed by special 'pragmatic rules' for illocutionary commitments, entitlements, and implicatures — in addition to, or in adjustment of, sentence-related schemes of semantic inference and presuppositions. The 'rules' (or norms) of proper inferences on the level of sentences are, however, themselves based on a form of joint practice. Hence, we should try to make the *pragmatic foundation of semantics* explicit (cf. Schneider 1975; Kambartel and Schneider 1981). This task includes explications of formal notions of truth in pragmatic terms.

In axiomatic theories we can read logically complex sentences (or axiom-schemes) as expressions for complex rules if we presuppose the competence of applying the 'detachment rule', i.e., modus ponens. An axiomatic system can be seen, in fact, as a generator of formulas or 'sentences' that, in turn, make certain rules of deduction explicit. The reason is this: The theorems can be either used as premises in applying inference rules, or they can be used directly as expressions for such inference rules. That is, any 'sentence' of the form 'if a then b' or

'a → b' deduced from the axioms can be used as a deductive rule of the form a ⇒ b. We are entitled to use the implication-rule in further deductions. The 'detachment rule' of modus ponens, (a, a → b) ⇒ b, corresponds to a meta-rule of applying explicit rules, namely (a, a ⇒ b) ⇒ b. At the same time, it corresponds to the logical theorem (a&a → b) → b. The deduction rule of *modus ponens* obviously has two premises: a and a → b. It has one conclusion: b. The use of this inference rule cannot be explained by a sentence of the form (a&a → b) → b without presupposing the competence to *use the rule* already. In other words, the *practical competence* to use the inference scheme *modus ponens* correctly is a crucial part of the meanig of an arrow or a conditional phrase of the form "if a, then b" — by which we make an 'inferential norm' explicit. The norm allows us to go from a to b. It 'exists' as an implicit or '*empractical*' (Bühler 1934: 52, 155; Kamlah and Lorenzen 1973: 48) form of (symbolic) action that we have learned to perform correctly.

Sentences of the form 'a → b', derived in an axiomatic system, can be read as expressions of available rules of the form 'a ⇒ b'. But in the end all complex sentences derived in an axiomatic system can be seen as complex inference rules themselves. That is, the task of such sentences is to make available rules explicit. This is clear for "&"-connections between sentences or rules. They 'say' that both sentences (both rules) are 'true' ('available'), so that we are entitled to use them. The same holds for 'quantified rules', i.e., for sentences of the form: 'for all x: if a(x) then b(x)' in symbols: '(∀x).a(x) → b(x).' The only problem is how to read negated sentences ¬a, disjunctive sentences 'avb', and existentially quantified sentences 'as expressions of rules'. But even this is not too difficult to explain in detail (see Stekeler-Weithofer 1992). Here it suffices to say that we add them as premises in further deductions.

It was Hilbert's idea, shared by Carnap, Tarski, and Quine, that the formal concept of logical inference as presented in (classical) predicate calculus *defines* the very meaning of the logical connectives implicitly, in a holistic, syncategorematic way. According to this 'formalist' approach, the calculus also defines the very concept of logically *valid* inference. Moreover, we allegedly think 'rationally' only if we make conclusions along the lines of a formalized or axiomatized 'logic' — as we know it from the paradigm case of first order predicate calculus.

But there is an alternative tradition leading from the work of Gottlob Frege via Gerhard Gentzen to Paul Lorenzen and Robert Brandom. In this tradition, predicate calculus does not *define* the meaning, and use, of the logical vocabulary containing expressions like "and", "or", "not" and "for all". Rather, the theorems of predicate calculus are 'formally valid' only insofar as they can be seen as *explicit articulations* of *admissible inferential rules*. This concept of admissibility must be understood in relation to an already defined concept of *material validity*. In Frege's

approach, the relevant concept of material validity is a presupposed concept of *truth* for elementary (i.e., logically basic) sentences in which no logical operator should appear. In other words, Frege presupposes a system of elementary sentences that are already evaluated as 'true' or 'false' — *tertium non datur*, i.e., non-evaluated sentences must be excluded. This means that Frege presupposes a *non-axiomatic model theory* in interpreting axiomatic systems.[11] Proofs in such models are 'informal' or 'half-formal' in the sense of the Gentzen-tradition of proof theory. In fact, we can use 'half-formal' rules with non-finite premises in order to define the 'truth' of quantified sentences inferentially even when the domain of the variables is infinite. Then we are in a position to read Frege's truth evaluation in an inferentialist surrounding. And we can distinguish it as a non-axiomatic, half-formal semantics from 'Tarskian' semantics which is Hilbertian, deductivist in the sense of Herbrand and, hence, merely syntacticist.

These ideas were technically developed in meta-mathematical proof theory. Their philosophical impact for formal semantics and, more generally, for a theory of meaning was shown at first in Lorenzen's (1955) work on *operative logics and mathematics*. Lorenzen saw that it is the concept of a *conservative extension* of a system of *material norms of inferences* that defines the concept of *validity* or *admissibility* for logical rules of half-formal and fully formal (syntactic) inference. From this it follows that there are *different* systems of logical validity: Classical calculus is defined by the fact that it *preserves the evaluation of truth for elementary sentences*. The calculus of intuitionistic logic preserves *direct justifiability of existential quantifications* by *effective constructions*.

In a sense, Gentzen and Lorenzen show that the alternative between Frege's alleged *Platonism* and Hilbert's and Carnap's *formalism* in the philosophy of logic, mathematics, and language is a false dichotomy. Their insight is that there is a third possibility that avoids vague and unclear metaphysical assumptions and, at the same time, the hidden dogmatism in all merely axiomatic approaches. In the formalist tradition of Analytical Philosophy, Carnap's famous principle of tolerance is restricted to different *axiomatic* systems as *syntactic calculi*.

Robert Brandom's idea of *Making it Explicit* (1994) stands in the tradition of Gentzen insofar as the rules, and 'sentences', of formal logic are seen as devices to make *valid material inferences explicit*. In order to avoid the rather misleading phrase "implicit rule" — rules, like sentences, are, according to my terminological proposal, a fortiori explicit — I use the words "norm" and "normative" in order to give general hints to the underlying concept of material validity and admissibility. The word "normative" does not have any particular ethical or moral connotation here. And we shall see below how the corresponding concept of admissibility will be developed into perspectival, i.e., speaker- and hearer-related, concepts of (material) *entitlement* and *commitment*. But first let me turn to the question of how we can use language in order to refer to the world.

2.3 Elementary states of affairs and empirical situations of things

In his elaboration and partial critique of Russell's ideas about logical atomism, the early Wittgenstein uses Frege's 'holistic' approach of explicating content, sense, and reference (i.e., *Bedeutung* in Frege's rather idiosyncratic sense) in a new context. He is not merely concerned with numbers and other mathematical entities and the truth-values or truth-evaluations of the corresponding sentences. Rather, he asks for conditions that make symbolic and linguistic representations or 'pictures' of objective things, facts, and possible states of affairs in the real world possible. His main, although somehow hidden question is: under what conditions can we refer to things in the world and (re)present a 'picture' of how things are by using language? The (explication of a) system of such conditions is called "logic". Logic is transcendental (Wittgenstein 1921: § 6.13), i.e., logic is a system of presupposed conditions for the possibility of making meaningful empirical claims at all.

Wittgenstein knew quite well that the use of Frege's logic in his sketch of such a system must be seen as an analogical or even merely metaphorical projection of what was developed in the analysis of mathematical discourse. Hence, his 'transcendental' analysis of logical or conceptual preconditions for *empirical* meanings and truths is articulated in the linguistic mode of 'showing' presupposed forms, not of claiming things about (linguistic or social) facts. Wittgenstein thus also talks about 'projection rules', by which we connect elementary sentences or statements like "this is red" or "this is a hand" with *intersubjectively available*, *joint*, *perceptions*.

I prefer to call, in the following, joint perceptions by their German word *Anschauung* in order to distinguish mere *sensations* and *animal perceptions* from (human) *apperception* in the sense of perception *with* conceptual determination. In addition to apperception, *Anschauung* not only presupposes conceptual distinctions but 'joint directedness' to 'present objects' in the following sense: Any person should be *able* to refer to a present object from *his* perspective. This means that any person taking part in the joint practice of *Anschauung* with respect to a present object should be able 'to posit' this object in a common spatial ordering of things and to 'posit' experienced properties 'of it' into a chronological order. Think, for example, of a chameleon on the table: it was red and is yellow now and is changing to brown. Here and now *we control* the joint reference to it and its properties *together*. All this takes place in an open horizon of presence, which is always somehow *extended* 'in space and time' as we say, but it still is limited, despite its openness. It is limited or finite because what *we jointly* distinguish *at present* in *Anschauung* is categorically distinguished from what is *not* here and does not happen *now*.

Wittgenstein does not speak about such a realm of present *Anschauung*. But by introducing it we can say concisely that and why correct statements about

Anschauung are not empirical but conceptual statements: If you do not agree with me or us sufficiently about when to say that this is (called) red, this yellow, this is a chameleon and that a chair, then you do not understand my or our language and we do not refer to worldly things together in case we use, perhaps by chance, the same words. In other words, the individual and joint mastery of deictical predications referring to present objects of joint *Anschauung* are basic parts of our logical form of linguistic representation. Meaningful statements about the real 'outer world' are *logically much more complex*. They have, according to the basic claim in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, already an inferentialist, even quantificational, structure. When I say, for example, that outside the door there is a green table, I say something like this: *if* you (or we) go outside *then* you (or we) will find a thing about which we *together* would say: "it is a table and it is green". Any appeal to correctness or 'truth' in naming things or predicating properties appeals to some form of "togetherness" in possible control of reference in present *Anschauung*. In other words, in our understanding of empirical sentences it is already logically or conceptually *presupposed* that we know what to say when about the thing (table) and its colour (green), at least in situations of present *Anschauung*.

Elementary sentences or statements in the Tractarian picture correspond to possible elementary states of affairs (*Sachverhalte*). They do so not by private stipulation but by social learning. We jointly control in present *Anschauung* if they obtain. If they do, Wittgenstein calls what they express (elementary) *facts* (*Tatsachen*).

Merely conceptual statements that are logically true (like: "if p then p" or "this (chameleon) is a chameleon" are not meaningful in an 'empirical' sense. The same holds for mere expressions of presently observed facts in joint *Anschauung*. Hence, no empirically meaningful statement expresses only an *elementary* (i.e., present) state of affairs, but a complex situation (*Sachlage*). It says *how things are*. In other words, present facts in *Anschauung* correspond, in a way, to *conceptually true statements*. Think, for example, of statements of the form "this is a chameleon" (where we can perceive it) or "this is green" (where we can see it). If we know the English language and if we can distinguish chameleons from other animals and the colour green from other colours, the statements do not convey empirical information at all. As such, but only as such, they are 'meaningless'. If I say in a shop that this shirt is green, I still may say more than this, e.g., when I want to tell you that it remains green in daylight. Then, in virtue of its inferential surplus, the truth of the statement cannot be checked by merely present observation on the basis of elementary linguistic abilities. The utterance would not just remind us what *we have learned*. What we have learned is, according to Wittgenstein, the connection of the elementary fact of uttering or hearing the utterance "this is green" and the elementary fact

of seeing something green. That is, we have learned to distinguish practically in a present situation between, say, "this is green" and "this is brown" or even "this is mean" on the one hand, and between the (ap)perception of green things and brown things, on the other.

As a result, I would say, meaningful empirical statements are not mere 'observation sentences'. They do not state present facts. They do not only remind us what to say and when to say it in joint *Anschauung*. They say something about *how things are*, about a whole *Sachlage* in Wittgenstein's sense. An empirical statement about *how things are* is true if the *relevant inferential consequences*, and hence, the corresponding normative 'commitments' of the speaker who utters the statement, are fulfilled; it is false if not.

3. From logical empiricism to social pragmatism

3.1 Empiricism's collapse into physicalist naturalism

The basic problem of logical empiricism lies in its concept of 'experience', which is allegedly grounded in immediate sensation. According to the idea of methodological solipsism in Carnap's *Aufbau*, for example, the empirical point of touch where language meets the real world is a *Humean* kind of *memory of resemblance of sensations*. But there is a deep tension between the idea that perceptions are *immediate, subjective sensations* and that they can be remembered and reported or described by observation sentences (*Konstatierungen*) that are, in a sense, 'non-inferential'. The latter idea says that possible perceptions can be explicitly 'predicted' or 'expected'; i.e., that they are possible consequences of (logically complex) statements in the framework of a 'theory'. But how does this fit to the first idea of immediacy?

It does not. The idea of pure, immediate, perception or sense data as possible objects of thought or linguistic reference is what Quine calls the first dogma of logical empiricism. More or less the same dogma was attacked by Sellars under the rubric of "the myth of the given". The insight that this dogma is incoherent leads to the new idea that observation is already (inferentially) theory-laden. But, perhaps, the converse principle, which I would attach to Wittgenstein and Hegel is even more important: Any 'theory' or, for that matter, any seemingly merely verbal inference is already 'full of experience'. Especially if we work with axiomatic systems, there is no way of drawing a clear and distinct line between conceptual (analytical or linguistic) truths and factual or material truth — at least if analyticity goes beyond the merely 'logical' rules of deduction, i.e., the rules of predicate calculus. 'Definitions' like "whales are mammals" or "physical bodies have a certain mass" are no mere verbal stipulations. They have empirical content. Quine holds,

therefore, that we might even be willing to change some core laws of deductive logic (viz. predicate calculus) if this proves necessary for suitable empirical representations of phenomena, even though Quine himself does not believe that this will be the case.

According to Sellars, we start with *material inferences* and develop suitable systems of axiomatic-deductive conceptual inferences.

Wittgenstein obviously had not succeeded in convincing Russell and the early Vienna circle that his idea of a distinction between elementary states of affairs — whose correspondence to elementary sentences are jointly controlled in a shared situation of present *Anschauung* — would have solved the whole problem at least in principle. Unfortunately, this lack of success (down to an empiricist reading of the *Tractatus*) is due to fairly misleading remarks by Wittgenstein himself, who here and there supports or seems to support an idea of methodological solipsism. Wittgenstein does not say enough about the acquired competence to take part in joint deictical differentiations and reference to objects in present *Anschauung*, in contradistinction to merely subjective sensation and animal perception. No wonder, therefore, that in their attempt to avoid subjectivism, Carnap and Russell had turned the wheel of logical empiricism, so to speak, from Kant back to Hume, and from Hume back to Locke. The road leads, thus, from Carnap's early radical empiricism to a physicalistic or 'naturalistic' theory. In the end, Neurath, Quine, even Davidson believe that the relation between things in the world and the sensation or perception of things is a *causal relation* — and that it must be reconstructed as such, even though we begin this reconstruction, according to Quine, from within, after we are, so to speak, touched by the world and its things through our senses. To be a physicalist or a naturalist of this kind means to assume that our best knowledge (i.e., theories) about certain 'causal connections' between the world of things and our physiological and psychological cognition should constitute the foundation of any theory of knowledge.

But there is a *metaphysical dogma* in Quine's program to *naturalize epistemology*. The dogma consists in an *a priori trust* in the *basic principle of causation* according to which any event and any state of affairs have their 'determining cause'.

This 'turn back to Locke' had some good reasons, too. These 'reasons' consisted in some 'Kantian' and 'Hegelian' insights into the problems of Hume's radical empiricism. They are paralleled by a Sellarsian critique of Russell, Carnap, and Ayer: Our knowledge does not rest on immediate phenomenal sense data. Rather than this, all knowledge begins with *apperceptions of things* in my or your or our present and object-related *Anschauung*, which I can share with you and others, thanks to some transformations of perspectives and joint conceptual distinctions. In other words, it is not mere sensation, it is 'apperception' and deictical

reference in a joint situation of present *Anschauung* that lies at the bottom of any knowledge claim which has meaning (i.e., inferential impact) and sense (i.e., perceptual impact) in the Kantian sense.

It is clear now in what sense my apperception, say of my hand here, can fail. It can turn out to be your hand, or my foot, at least in special cases in which the possibility of such an 'error' has to be taken into account. On the other hand, the spade of justificational grounding bends back if all relevant speakers and hearers agree and are content with the corresponding conceptual determination in deictic reference.

In a sense though, all philosophers involved in this dispute seem to agree with Hegel that there is no immediacy in my epistemic relation to the world. This is, so to speak, the holistic and anti-foundational turn in analytical philosophy. But there is a danger in this move. It lies in the fact that anti-foundational holism opens the door for all kinds of 'belief-ontologies', as I call all approaches that start with some vague heuristics and 'intuitions', continue with dogmatic principles or axioms, and develop formal theories, e.g., for 'rational decisions' or 'possible worlds' or 'theory change' or for any other dogma or doxa in 'formal philosophy'. In the end, the critical impulse of analytical philosophy evaporates. One of the basic problems is that presuppositional analysis of methodical steps in theory formation is dismissed as allegedly 'foundational'.

When Quine focuses on our learning what to say and when, he tries to avoid the problems of Humeanism. This is alright. Unfortunalely, he does so in a kind of 'realist' and 'naturalist' fashion. Quine starts his explanation of cognition with the 'fact' that we react to glimpses of things that touch the surface of our body, the skin, the eye, or the ear, for example. This leads us back, all in all, to the old empiricist theory of *impression*. In fact, we may say that Quine continues on traditional lines when he views symbolic or linguistic behavior as causally triggered by perceptions. In doing so, he combines dispositional behaviorism with causal explanations of perceptions; and his naturalism puts all this in a holistic context of linguistic and non-linguistic, individual and social behavior.

3.2 Chomsky's and Davidson's cognitivist theories of radical interpretation

Davidson's *cognitivist* theory of *radical interpretation*[12] incorporates at least some basic features of Chomsky's theory of how we (allegedly) develop linguistic competence. Chomsky assumes some learning device by which he wants to explain why humans, not animals, are able to learn certain syntactic structures, i.e., recursive rules for producing, and parsing sentences. Chomsky's basic idea is this: By being exposed to linguistic usage, the child establishes or 'sets' certain parameters

in its learning device. Davidson's idea of explaing semantic competence proceeds in a similar way: Every one of us has to adapt his (linguistic) behavior to the (linguistic) behavior of others in such a way that the pragmatical 'success' of common understanding and cooperation is 'maximized' in some way or other. (Details are not important here.) According to Davidson's picture, each of us constructs (or 'figures out') 'rules' or 'schemes' of syntactico-semantical compositions that fit the sentences he has heard or read.[13] Tarski provides us, according to Davidson, with an outline of the idea of how a theory of truth can be read as a theory of interpretation, consisting in a syntacto-semantical analysis of the sentences heard. The idea is that we develop a description of the syntacto-semantical surface and inferential deep structure of all sentences *S* of a language-in-use. In other words, Davidson assumes a kind of parsing device by which we 'analyze' the sentences of a given corpus and construct a 'theory of truth-conditions' for an infinite set of sentences in such a way that the sentences of the corpus turn out to be true.

The process of learning cannot take off if the following (necessary) condition is not fulfilled: The linguistic examples we hear and read are syntacto-semantically 'correct' and 'true' — in whatever sense we understand this notion of correctness or truth. But notice that the basic sense of 'truth' here is totally formal. It only means that I say 'the same' as you say. In fact we can learn a language only on the ground of the 'assumption' that most of the sentences we hear and read are syntacto-semantically correct and true. They form the 'corpus' to which we adapt, according to Davidson, our internal 'rules' that create a kind of 'logical deep structure' for the sentences of the corpus.

Obviously, we can never be sure that our schemes of understanding are identical. The only thing we know is that we got along with them more or less successfully up to now. Therefore, Chomsky and Davidson agree that there is no 'language' and that there are no 'linguistic rules' in any literal sense. The only things that really exist are linguistic performances and interpretative devices of 'understanding' them on the grounds of an internally developed syntacto-semantical deep-structure.

Davidson's further idea is that we need some 'triangulation' when we want to project our words to experience. But this does not mean that Davidson shares the insight about the basic role of present *Anschauung* as it is attributed here to the early Wittgenstein (and to Kant, for that matter). The status of Davidson's triangulation is different. It does not mean that I am trained to acquire a *capacity* to play an active part in a joint practice. If Brandom (1994) had followed Davidson in this respect, I could not but disagree. Judgements in which we exercise our faculty of joint distinctions of 'objects' (gestalts, things, colours, present movements or whatever) in *Anschauung* are free actions. They are, as Andrea Kern (2005) aptly says, performances of a rational faculty. In Davidson's picture, however, triangulation

only means that I somehow have to adapt my subjective interpretation in order to take your peculiar perspective into account. The idea is this: If I, for example, wanted to interpret your performance of a speech act like "this (thing) here is a red hat", I have to correlate your sentence to my own sentence "that (thing) over there is a red hat". But in fact, we do not do things like this in private. We learn to do it in the context of an already established we-perspective. That is, the child learns gradually to take part in a practice of uttering and controlling correct statements about joint *Anschauung*. And we often playfully or joyfully make sure that the situation of *Anschauung* is a *shared one*, for example when we point to a mountain and say "look, the Mont Blanc", even when knowing that the other(s) already see the mountain and know that it is the Mont Blanc.

The problem of Davidson's, Chomsky's and perhaps even Brandom's picture is a hidden form of methodological individualism. Chomsky and Davidson support a kind of (mental) *regulism* by which they want to *explain* the regularities of linguistic behavior. Quine, on the other hand, is sceptical against such claims of modern cognition theory and remains content with linguistic behaviorism or *regularism*. Brandom's approach takes the *social* and *normative* structure of learning and the social and traditional mode of existence of implicit norms of correctness more seriously. At the same time, he shares Quine's scepticism against social (external) and mental (internal) regulism.

The problem of regulism is this: Before believing in a machinery of developing individual linguistic competence and before interpreting this comptence as a kind of rule-following as we know it from computational linguistics — which has to be understood as a technical device for artificial language processing —, we should better ask if we really are allowed to assume Chomskyan schemes of generative syntax or Davidsonian schemes of radical interpretation in order to 'explain' what we do when we learn to 'interpret' the words or sentences we are exposed to. The mere fact that we learn to communicate in a language does not force us to assume, with Chomsky, an inborn theory of grammar nor, with Davidson, a semantic parsing device along a 'Tarskian' line of an axiomatically defined truth-in-a-model.[14]

With respect to elementary predication in present joint perception, the later Carnap and Paul Lorenzen proposed that we learn the use of predicators like "this is red" or "this is a stone" in the context of providing deictical examples and counter-examples. What we learn here is not just linguistic behavior but active participation in joint linguistic practice. We learn to differentiate present states of affairs. This very *capacity* to perform the corresponding *Anschauungsurteile* or judgments about apperceptions *at will* makes it possible that we, as individuals, *can err* in such judgements in cases when we, by some chance, do not exercise the capacity in the right way, or that we, once again as individuals, *can deliberately tell a lie*, for

example when knowing that the addressed others are, by some chance, not in the position to control, with us, the propriety conditions immediately. Whoever tells a lie knows what would be correct. He nevertheless does not say the right thing. But when I commit an error, I fail to exercise a generic capacity due to some interfering causes or due to some defect in my ability or learnedness.

3.3 Linguistic pragmatics and the idea of a pragmatical foundation of semantics

The common contention of all adherents to inferential semantics now seems to be this: Semantics altogether is *not* to be understood as an analysis of a *metaphysical* relation between signs or symbols or words or sentences on the side of *semiotic and linguistic practice* (1), thoughts or ideas on the side of *mental representations* (2), and things and properties, states of affairs and events on the side of the *world* (3). To presuppose such a metaphysical theory of representation always means, as Rorty has repeated again and again, not to go deep enough in a reflective analysis of what we do when we *talk about* meaning(s) and truth(s), about objects and 'the world', and when we *use* signs and words in different modes of speech and in different contexts.

An important further question is what we do when we *judge in retrospect* that a given use (a token) or usage (a form or type of possible use) is meaningful, correct, or 'true'. The *goal* of inferential semantics is to *replace* the assumption of a metaphysical 'mirror-of-nature' relation between words and ideas (or thoughts) and between words (or ideas) and their objects by an analysis of the things we *do* with words. The question how we distinguish between the real and the unreal, between the actual and the possible, between the concrete and the abstract is now seen as a *practical* question. These distinctions are neither given nor clear. They have to be reconstructed in the context of our use of words in joint experience, practice, and life — which hopefully is a cooperative, human practice and life rather than a 'Humean', solipsistic, and as such merely animal behavior.

Morris and Carnap had still thought that the order of the reconstruction of 'meaning' should proceed from syntax via formal semantics to pragmatics, i.e., from an analysis of syntactically and semantically well-formed sentences to rules of their proper use in utterances. The order was given in nuce by Frege's distinction between truth-evaluative semantics of (mathematical) sentences and the 'pragmatic' performation-sign " ⊢ ", which makes the (written) speech act of assertion explicit. It is easy to see, with Frege, Wittgenstein and Austin, that there are much more speech acts to be distinguished: questions and commands, promises and excuses, expressions of regrets or expressions of condolence and declarations

of intentions, just to name a few. In all these cases it seems, at least at first, that the propositional content p of what is asked for, what is promised, what is intended or what should be excused must be already given. And this means that the truth or satisfaction conditions for assertions 'with the same propositional content' p of these different speech acts must be known already. In order to understand a yes-or-no-question, for example, I must know the truth condition of a possible answer already. In the same way, I must know what the satisfaction condition of an assertion p is in order to understand what is promised or predicted if someone says that he promises or predicts that p. Therefore it seems that, despite all the debates about an alleged overestimation of assertions after Frege's linguistic or logicist turn in philosophy of language and linguistics, the semantics of assertive utterances is, in a sense, indeed foundational with respect to the pragmatics of different speech acts.

But, on the other hand, there is a perspectival turn precisely when it comes to an analysis of the truth conditions of sentences and assertions. In a traditional Fregean setting, the truth-value of a sentence S is fixed by some semantic rules. When uttering the assertion "$\vdash S$" (e.g, by writing it down), we *claim* that the value attributed to *S* is the value "true" or "the True". In our development of the inferential approach, however, we found out that a sentence can be read as making a possible rule of inference explicit. A possible claim of the form "$\vdash S$" can be understood in this way: It says that the rule expressed in *S* is valid or can be used. If you, for example, make the claim, I am entitled to use the rule expressed by the sentence and you are committed, in case the question why the rule is admissible arises, to show me the reasons for your claim of admissibility. In the case of logical connectives, schematic dialogues between a proponent and an opponent of an assertion, read as a complex rule, can make its 'inferential meaning' explicit. This idea of game-theoretical semantics in a setting of giving and asking for reasons was developed by Kamlah and Lorenzen (1973: 196–213). It reappears in a different, perhaps less explicit, form in Brandom's approach.

For a philosophy of language, the details of such games are not as important as the following general insight: Instead of fixing evaluative truth-conditions for sentences, inferential semantics follows inferential pragmatics in the sense that the norms of correct performances of assertions or judgements, asking for reasons and giving answers determine the use and meaning of sentences in the context of assertive claims directly. We can say that, from now on, semantical analysis takes place in a generalized speech act analysis for assertions and argumentations. And we can speak of pragmatics as a foundation for semantics and syntax (Schneider 1975).

In the development of American pragmatism, semantic theory also gets a peculiar *pragmatic* and *social twist*. Rorty, for one, takes sides, in a way, with W. James who saw that one of the functions of the words "true" lies in the *appraisal* of what

is taken to be true by the speaker. The phrase "it is true that" corresponds in many cases to the use of Frege's performation sign " ⊢ ". Such a *performative* is neither a *truth-predicate* in a meta-language as in a Tarskian setting, nor is it a *modal operator* as in recursive uses of expressions like "it is (contingently) true that it is possible that it is true that p". For the performative use of "it is true", Frege's redundancy thesis holds: To say that "It is true that it is true that p" is just a stuttering version of " ⊢ p". And to say that "it is false that it is true that p" is just the same as ⊢ ¬p. But if we want to refer anaphorically to nominalized sentences and say, for example, what was said there and then is true, we need, of course, a kind of truth-predicate and cannot do only with the performative. That is, here we have to use the predicative form "x is true".

The distinction and relation between a performative, a predicative and an operative use of "it is true that" are not further developed here. I rather want to show why Rorty's heavily contested 'appraisal theory' of the performative use of "it is true" or any other form of expressing assertive force is an important, perhaps fundamental, insight of philosophical and linguistic pragmatism. Rorty shifts focus from formal and abstract attachments of truth-values to sentences or utterances to the role words play in sentences, sentences in speech acts, and speech acts in a practice of coordinating behavior and making cooperative actions possible. In fact, by the advertizing lable 'solidarity' Rorty focuses on groups of language users and overcomes in his 'social' theory of truth and meaning the metaphysical grip in which representational theories still remain. At the same time, he overcomes merely abstract or formalist concepts of truth as well. In a sense, Brandom elaborates Rorty's ideas, which go in some way back to Wilfrid Sellars.

According to the resulting picture, the speaker is *committed* to what he appraises and he *entitles* the hearer to rely on it. This is, in a way, an assimilation of 'true (enough)' to 'good (enough)'. In a sense, it is similar to Stevenson's appraisal theory of the basic use of the word "good": To say that some action is good means to say something like: "I approve it — and you should do so too". But, of course, appraisals are not merely decisionistic. One can ask for reasons.

In a sense, the appraisal theory of the True and the Good is a *core insight* of American pragmatism. It is a most important step in a reflection on the real constitution of the concept of truth and the idea of the good. But it is clear that such a *pragmatist analysis* of the basic meaning of "true" and "good" immediately finds its opponents. It does not seem to distinguish between the True and the Good with capital letters, nor between knowledge and mere persuasion, nor between justice and mere propaganda. In fact, pragmatist semantics has to face the problems raised by such attacks.

As we have seen, the performatory function of appraisal certainly does not exhaust the uses of the word "true". An appraisal theory of truth does not solve all the problems of *meaning* and *reference*, of what there *really* is or exists independently of our subjective thoughts and beliefs. Moreover, there is a danger of wishful thinking or instrumentalism, of relativism and of linguistic idealism. As we know, it can happen that certain errors and even lies are, by chance or systematically, somehow beneficial, as Nietzsche had already seen. Russell uses this in his attack of William James: Be it beneficial or not, saying so does not make things so. Even if a large society takes something as true, this taking something as true does not make it true. Therefore, there is a challenge to avoid or overcome 'relativist' dangers without leaving the insights of the previous turns in logical analysis behind. We should resist, in fact, the tendency to return to some open or hidden metaphysical faith, to any sort of objectivism, be it theological, historical, naturalist or expertocratic. Instead, it is necessary to develop a kind of *normative* spin to Rorty's social twist of pragmatism.

According to this spin, which we find in Brandom's approach, the uses of phrases like "is correct", "is true", "does exist" or "does really refer" belong to a normative and, if you wish, meta-level, discourse in which *we assess* claims or assertions in a kind of control game of giving and asking for reasons. On this ground, we can account for the difference between appraisal and correctness, 'subjective' commitment and 'objective' entitlement. This and much more is shown in Brandom's work *Making it Explicit*. After this book, the pragmatic twist of the linguistic turn in our analysis of meaning and truth, of belief, knowledge, and intention cannot be turned back, especially not by arguments of the type Bertrand Russell could still use against William James.

4. From individual intentionality to social normativity

4.1 Intentions and conventions

An alternative approach to a 'pragmatic' theory of meaning starts with intentions (Grice 1989) or intention-based conventions (Lewis 1979): In a communicative act, a speaker tries to let a hearer openly understand what he wants him to do or to believe. The openness condition does not presuppose sincerity yet. It is rather a condition of publicity or, for that matter, a condition of expressiveness: The public intention must be explicit in some way or other. It can, as in the case of manipulation or deception, contradict silent intentions. Obviously, the idea fits fairly well the 'intentional' uses of symbols or even signals. As Eike von Savigny (1983) has shown, we can use syntactically fairly primitive signals like the horn or the lights

of a car in order to warn others or to greet them, to thank them or just to say 'hello'. The addressee understands the intention in a kind of free cooperation. He has to consider circumstances, possible readings, cancel unfitting and improbable ones and interpret the speaker charitably, for example by silenty or openly correcting obvious or probable mistakes or malapropisms. There is much important work done on these topics in linguistic pragmatics. They include differentiations between literal and figurative meaning, conceptual inference, presupposition, implicature, illocutionary and perlocutionary aspects of speech acts and other things. The point I want to make here is just this. The standard situation described by Grice (1989: 24, 92–116 and passim; Meggle 1997: 22) applies only in cases when a speaker or 'sender' already has definite intentions and the hearer or addresse is able to 'interpret' them by attributing possible intentions to the speech act or communicative act. The speaker must already 'know' (somehow) what he wants the addressee to do or to believe. In order to have, or to ascribe, such definite intentions, it is already presupposed that he knows their specific propositional content. We cannot 'explain' this content by the intentions which underly the use of, say, a sentence.

David Lewis develops an intention-based theory of conventions: Conventions solve problems of *coordinating* individual actions (Lewis 1979: ch. 1). Such problems are, for example, how to avoid running into another or disturbing one another's actions if this is possible without extra costs. A basic example is the convention of driving on the left in England. After a convention like this is established, by chance or by some implicit practice, following it is in the individual interest of each agent. This is a defining feature of mere problems of coordination. Any such problem has a 'conventional solution'. Each of us is better off by sticking to the given convention. We can make a coordinating scheme even safer by control and sanction: Rational calculation of my advantage can be guided by a threat of sanctions.

A precondition for the possibility of coordinative actions of the 'Lewis-Type', as I would like to call it, is this. Each individual tries to maximize her gains and minimize her losses. In doing so, she considers what other persons (probably or most surely) will do and think and what they most probably think about my probable judgments and actions.[15] Some knowledge about collectively shared convictions may also be helpful. The crucial point now is this. A reduction of coordinative action to individual intention and belief is possible only when the persons are already able to form well defined intentions and contentions. This is no harmless precondition. It is not harmless because animals, for example, do not have the means to reflect in a Lewis-type way. They cannot represent the *content* of what other creatures might 'think' and they cannot 'think' in the relevant way at all because this presupposes the practice of speaking a language. In fact, any conventionalist

explanation of 'meanings' presupposes already fairly complicated linguistic representations of intention and contention. But we can have determinate contentions and intentions only if we can properly deal with the corresponding correctness conditions of our beliefs, and with the commitments of our intentions. Therefore, the conventionalist approach does not get off the ground from animal behavior to a well-coordinated 'linguistic behavior'.

4.2 Flight from intentions — to norms

To *have* well determined intentions and contentions presupposes the competence of taking (correctly) part in a practice of expressing intentions and contentions. This practice already contains a reflective practice in which we control the correctness or propriety of the individual speech acts with respect to situation and context, including what the person later does and says. Moreover, it contains the competence of talking (silently) to oneself. Hence, intending and believing is a social and cultural competence. To be able to 'think' in this way presupposes not only linguistic competence but also the faculty of representing possible speakers and hearers in (silent linguistic) representations of roles.[16] This is the core insight of a philosophical linguistic turn that must not be given up by current naturalizations and cognitive theories: Conceptual competence is a basic condition of being human. It is the ability of following (implicit) norms of cooperation and controlling the use of (explicit) rules.

Brandom's *normative* and at the same time *inferentialist* philosophy of "making it explicit" tries to avoid, accordingly, (Quine's) regularism, (Millikan's) behaviorism, (Davidson's) internal regulism, but all mystifications of intentionalism as well. According to Brandom, to have well determined intentions in contradistinction to some mere animal desire presupposes the mastery of propositional content. Having intentions means to be in a position of *weak normative commitment*. At first we have to learn, so to speak, the weak normative commitment of *declaring an intention*. In such a declaration of my will, as we might say, I neither 'predict' what I shall do nor do I 'promise' to do it. Nevertheless I am in some weak sense bound to do it. If I never act according to my open (or, for that matter, silent) declaration of my will, I certainly do not know how to have definite intentions. In fact, there is a fairly elaborate practice in which we distinguish between cases in which we change our intentions, and cases in which we do not have a determinate intention at all.

Brandom's picture — as I would like to understand it — is this. We learn to take part in an already established social game with its 'implicit' norms of correct play and incorrect moves. These norms show up especially when we look at the practice of 'sanctioning' incorrect moves in one way or other. It is not the expression R of a

rule or norm or criterion but the way we distinguish between correct and incorrect moves (perhaps following the expressive intention to follow the rule R) that define what it is to follow the norm or rule in action. Hence, implicit rule-following can be made explicit by use of 'names' or 'symbols' for the rules or, as it were, by whole sentences — on the grounds of a practice of controlling the relation between symbolic acts and fulfilments of commitments. Brandom follows Quine, insofar as language is treated as a social art, and Davidson, insofar as he supports a deflationary, use-theoretic, concept of truth, or rather, of proper inference as basic for the very concept of meaning. He differs from Quine and Davidson in the insight that all the explicit axioms and rules of formal logic are *linguistic constructions*. We use them to make *empractically* established forms and norms of inferences explicit. But these norms are *not* to be treated as internal rules of subjective reasoning, as in Davidson's (hidden) internal regulism, nor as merely behavioral dispositions and somehow 'successful' attitudes, as Quine and Millikan treat them. Moreover, Brandom takes the paradox of analysis more seriously: Making implicit norms explicit by rules or sentences always changes the situation. It does so by adding a new practice of rule-following.

The most important feature of Brandom's 'normative turn' is that it helps us to understand the following insight of the later Wittgenstein better: There is no purely 'descriptive' or 'phenomenological' perspective by which we can give an immediate account of the concept or competence of understanding or correct rule-following. In order to give such an account, we do not only need the perspective of an actor, but a second perspective of a person who can assess correctness. But we need even more. Giving and asking for reasons presupposes a whole culture of human cooperation.

Brandom's word for controlling correctness is "scorekeeping". This metaphor for the control of fulfilment or non-fulfilment of already acknowledged rules or norms goes back to Lewis (1989). But there, scorekeeping is just a kind of notation. It makes the relevant 'contextual history' for evaluating entitlements and commitments in actual performances of language games between (two) persons in a certain way explicit. It works similarly to the evaluation of truth values for logically complex sentences. In both cases the criteria (Lewis speaks of "scorekeeping functions") that tell us how to evaluate ('correctly') further steps in a sequence of moves made in the context of actualizing an interactive or cooperative language game are presupposed. Brandom tries to get rid of this presupposition. His scorekeeping judgements are perspectival and subjective. But if they do not appeal to common criteria, what makes them non-arbitrary?

A comparison with Lorenz and Lorenzen's (1978) notation of dialogical logic shows the difference. There, two persons also play a game of asking for and giving

reasons. A proponent wants to defend his claims against real or possible questions of an opponent. If the dialogue is played according to certain rules, the notation presented is a scorekeeping device. We can now look in a systematic way for strategies of the proponent. If he has one, he is entitled to his claim because he can defend it. Real argumentation, however, cannot be reduced to schematic rules for inferential entitlement and commitment of this kind. On the other hand, we need the possibility of an appeal to already accepted rules or norms — or else we cannot distinguish correct from incorrect moves in the game. Discussions *about* the norms or rules are of a different kind. Mastering the meta-game of joint reflective judgement *about* norms and rules in their relation to proprietary actions differs from making correct moves according to some (already accepted) norms.

As I take it, Brandom holds that norms exist in a kind of implicit acknowledgment by *us* as actors *and* jurors in the context of *free cooperative actions* and *practices*. The resulting question, how forms and norms 'exist' in such a way that we can appeal to them and that we nevertheless can change and develop them in a corresponding practice or by argumentations, is a deep question that arises after these considerations and does not contradict them.

4.3 Truth, evolution, and religion

Belief and knowledge, understanding and acknowledging take place in a kind of already pre-formed or pre-existing language game that already contain deontic structures. As individuals, we learn to take part in undertaking commitments, granting entitlements to theoretical (verbal) and practical (action-orienting) inferences, and assessing the commitments of speakers. Even the constitution of objective reference has to be understood along this line. We refer to an objective thing in a common space of actual or possible *Anschauung* if we claim, in some sense or another, that you can refer 'to the same thing' and attach 'the same property' (defined by inferential commitments and entitlements) to it. We can be wrong about such properties and nevertheless refer to an object, for example when we say that the deer over there is brown — but it was, as you might claim (or see), a cow. There are, obviously, methods of implicit attributions and explicit ascriptions of 'intended' reference that contain partial corrections of implict or explicit identity claims or predications on the side of the hearer. I do not go further into this field. I only repeat the importance of joint *Anschauung* for avoiding the possible danger of sense-data empiricism.

On the other hand, we should not just presuppose a transcendent notion of truth, but start the analysis with our real, finite, if you will, civil and pragmatic notion of knowledge and truth in the context of claiming and attributing fulfilments

of 'truth' or 'satisfaction' conditions. And we can express these conditions and fulfilments of commitments and entitlements more clearly if we consider dialogical language games. But there is a further need for an analysis of the *logical form of idealization*. A reconstruction of our concept of ideal, situation-independent, 'timeless' truth in pragmatic terms would have to clarify our *internal* distinction between 'civil' or 'finite' and 'absolute' truth and knowledge. We make use of this ideal concept for quite some purposes in the context of explicit reflection on the human condition, for example when we articulate an orienting direction in a development of science or society by talking about ideal goals of 'absolute truth' or 'absolute justice'. Of course, a proper understanding of such a talk has to avoid any dogmatic appeal to reason, truth, or justice. Hence, the task of a critical philosophy of language is not the avoidance but an explication of the proper use of a mode of speech that could be labelled, following Hegel, *absolute*. Without an analysis of this logical form no analysis of truth and knowledge or, for that matter, of a proper use of any appeal to reason (with or without capital R) is sufficient.

There is another shortcoming in Brandom's grand picture I want to mention. I call it the danger of social behaviorism. There is, in fact, still a problem in Brandom's and Rorty's Sellarsianism, shared, for example, by Ruth Millikan. The problem is the unjustified decision of giving physical and biological evolution the last word in all 'explanations' of the very possibility of human competence, even in assessments of the reality and objectivity of such a competence. By this move, evolutionary narratives or cosmological 'myths' become not only the ultimate place for explaining the very existence and genealogy of norms, but criteria for consistency and coherence as well. In fact Rorty wants to explain culture as a continuation of natural evolution. Brandom wants to explain normativity on the basis of the one and only natural, in the end physical, world, mediated by social behavior of positive and negative sanctions as reactions to the behavior of others. There seems to be a deep faith in the cosmological stories of physics and biology at bottom. But does this not mean that the whole enterprise of giving a non-Platonist account of the human world collapses? It collapses at least if the truth-claims of evolutionary stories are not questioned in their status. As long as this does not happen, they turn into an absolute, in the end in itself Platonist, faith — despite all verbal criticism of the very concept of absolute truth Rorty is famous for.

There would be a different perspective if we put our philosophical reflections into a context of a therapeutic and educational enterprise. Such a more modest point of view starts in the middle of life and practice and takes part in improving a certain culture of language use and language design for the purpose of a better, more reflective understanding of science, culture, and ourselves. If we did this, we would avoid muddling logical and cosmological reasoning. In fact, a lack of

reflection on the logical, scientific and cultural status of cosmologies (including human anthropology and history) might be a congenital defect of pragmatism altogether, a defect to be found in Peirce and James and Dewey as well as in Quine, Rorty and Brandom, or so it seems.

The problem is a meta-philosophical one. We can see it if we use the insights of a contextual, holistic and inferential theory of meaning and truth for an assessment of 'cosmological' statements. What do these statements commit us to belief and to do — if we accept them? And why should we accept them? Just because we feel like it? Or because we aim at a coherent picture of the one and only world we live in? And what does it mean to want *one* picture? Is it a question of knowledge and science, or rather of aesthetics, or even of insufficiently secularized religion?

Notes

1. Already in his correspondence with Hilbert, Frege (1976: 55–80) criticizes an early version of the idea of axiomatic definitions, as found in Hilbert (1899).

2. Below, I shall replace the English "intuition" by the German word "*Anschauung*" because it should refer to a joint practice of *observing* things, *not* to *introspections*.

3. Frege (1879: 3): "[…] weil im Urtheile hier nur in Betracht kommt, was auf die *möglichen Folgerungen* Einfluß hat".

4. Cf. also the beginning of Kambartel's considerations in this volume.

5. Cf. John McDowell's remarks on this in this volume.

6. In view of the second possibility, substitutional quantification should not be read in a too narrow way. See Stekeler-Weithofer and Mendonça (1987) and Stekeler-Weithofer (1999).

7. It is only a technical decision of the later Frege to view sentences as 'names' of truth-values. This enables him to 'identify' predicates and relations with 'characteristic functions' having exactly two possible values, called "The True" and "The False". Thus, the "reference" (*Bedeutung*) of a sentence is its truth-value. The procedure rests on the following fact: Frege's concept of a *valid material inference* (in his form of logicistic set theory or 'higher arithmetics') can be expressed by a rule or sentence of the form $A \to B$, and replacements of true sentences for true sentences or false sentences for false sentences do not change the validity of the resulting material inference $A' \to B'$.

8. I do not comment here on Carnap's special concepts of intension and intensional isomorphisms.

9. In the same way we can say, for example, that Cauchy-sequences or Dedekind-cuts of rational numbers are intensional entities with respect to real numbers.

10. On this point see also Sebastian Rödl's paper in this volume.

11. Proofs of the completeness theorem for predicate calculus as well as for Gödel's incompleteness theorem make heavy use of such non-axiomatic 'models' or structures, e.g., of (standard) arithmetics; properly understood, they already transcend the limitations of Hilbertian axiomatic definitions and merely Tarskian semantics.

12. The original paper under this title was published in 1973; it is reprinted in Davidson (1984).

13. In note 6 of his paper in this volume, Scharp says that, according to Davidson, humans actually do not construct Tarskian theories of truth to interpret each other. But what, then, could theorists (metaphorically?) 'show' by using such a theory?

14. A parsing device or (radical) interpretation is only a (radical) *translation* into some other formal or natural language. The mastery of the target language already is presupposed. No theory of translation, especially no Tarskian theory can give a sufficient answer to the question how the target language is learned and how it relates to the world. Therefore, Davidson's theory is a much too weak, not a full blooded, theory of meaning, as Dummett (1993: 5) rightly sees.

15. There is, as always in such cases, a (syntactically recursive) continuation of these forms of expressions: I think about what you think about what I think about you — and so on.

16. After some experience, our verbal planning gains speed; and it appears to us as inner thinking 'without language' especially because it is done in a *general* way *before* our conscious control of the *particular* sequence of words we finally utter.

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The nature of meaning

Brandom versus Chomsky*

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Part of the philosophy of language of the 20th century is marked by a shift from a conception of language as a tool of representing the world to a conception of it as a means of interacting with the world. This shift is common to the later Wittgenstein, to pragmatists and neopragmatists including Brandom, and also to Chomsky and his school. The claim of the paper is that though the Chomskyans have offered an admirably elaborated theory of syntax adequate to the interactive view of language, they failed to develop a comparably adequate notion of semantics; and that it is Brandom's approach which, though *prima facie* much more speculative and much less scientific, paves the way to a semantic theory which an 'interactivist' should endorse.

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1. Philosophy of language: from the picture theory to the toolbox theory

The attack in the first half of the 20th century by Russell, Carnap and other proponents of the new, 'scientific' philosophy (which is later called *analytic*) on the 'idealist' views of the previous philosophical generation stemmed from the conviction that it is absurd to assume that the world is 'made by our minds'. The world is there and we simply picture it in terms of our language and our thoughts. This conviction led these new philosophers to regard language as a collection of means for *representing things*. The passive role of mind and language within the process of acquiring 'knowledge of the external world' was especially stressed by Russell and Moore, who thereby emancipated themselves from the 'idealism' of the previous generation of English philosophers (see Hylton 1992).

The most elaborated version of this 'picture theory' of the language-world relationship was provided by the early Wittgenstein (1921) in his *Tractatus*.

However, Wittgenstein was rather quick in recognizing the shortcomings of this picture. He realized that if we pay due attention to the way language really functions, then the idea that it is simply a system of names of things serving us to picture more complex states of affairs — viz. *facts* — fails to be adequate. In particular, Wittgenstein realized that the notion of *naming* or *representing* is itself far too problematic to be taken as an 'unexplained explainer', and that we need some deeper level of explanation.

To see why, let us consider the seemingly simple-minded question: *What does giving a name to a thing consist in, in the first place?* It may seem that naming is simply something on a par with sticking a label to an object — an utterly perspicuous move, which is in no need of explanation. However, imagine that we literally take a label with a string of letters and stick it on an object, say on a car. Does it mean that we have given a *name* to the car? Not really: it may count simply as a decoration of the car, or as an indication of the owner of the car, etc. What accounts for the difference between taking the string on the label as a name and taking it as something else? Well, it seems that it is the habits and social practices of the community in question: if sticking names on cars is something usual, then it is likely to be taken as a name and hence therefore *be* a name;[1] in other cases it may not.

Hence something is a name if and only if it is treated in a certain way. We might perhaps want to say that it is a name of a thing if it serves us to articulate claims about the thing. This is what Wittgenstein (1953: §49) points out:

> … naming and describing do not stand on the same level: naming is a preparation for description. Naming is so far not a move in the language-game — any more than putting a piece in its place on the board is a move in chess. We may say: nothing has so far been done, when a thing has been named. It has not even got a name except in the language-game. This was what Frege meant too, when he said that a word had meaning only as part of a sentence.

However, at the same time Wittgenstein warns us not to assume that there is one principal purpose of language, like describing or representing things and their constellations. Rather, there are various things we can do with words. Not all these things can be explained in terms of naming. Naming is only *one* of them, moreover, it is inextricably interwoven with some others. Hence, we have to set out for the analysis of the practices. We have to try to understand the 'language games we play'. This was stressed by Coffa (1991: 267) in his survey of Wittgenstein's views: "The ultimate explanatory level in semantics is not given by reference to unsaturation or to the forms of objects or meanings, but by reference to the meaning-giving activity of human beings, an activity embodied in their endorsement of rules". This is what led Wittgenstein to abandon the picture theory of language in favor of what can be called a toolbox theory:

> Language is like a collection of very various tools. In the tool box there is a hammer, a saw, a rule, a lead, a glue pot and glue. Many of the tools are akin to each other in form and use, and the tools can be roughly divided into groups according to their relationships; but the boundaries between these groups will often be more or less arbitrary and there are various types of relationship that cut across one another (Wittgenstein 1969: §31).

Wittgenstein also realized that what is crucial for our linguistic practices, which draw on the toolbox of language, is the concept of a rule — there is a sense in which the practices are (essentially!) *rule-governed*. This, however, does not seem to be a great discovery: there are rules associated with almost everything we do. We have rules of chess, rules of cooking, even perhaps something like rules for using a hammer. But Wittgenstein realized that the rules of language are rather unlike such rules, for example those of cooking:

> Why don't I call cookery rules arbitrary, and why am I tempted to call the rules of grammar arbitrary? Because I think of the concept 'cookery' as defined by the end of cookery, and I don't think of the concept 'language' as defined by the end of language. You cook badly if you are guided in your cooking by rules other than the right ones; but if you follow other rules than those of chess you are playing another game; and if you follow grammatical rules other than such and such ones, that does not mean you say something wrong, no, you are speaking of something else (ibid.: §133).

From this point of view, the rules of language are more like the rules of chess: they are *constitutive* of our language-games in a similar way in which rules of chess are constitutive of chess. At the same time they are very unlike the rules of chess in one crucial respect: they are not explicit. People follow the rules of chess because they have learned to use them: they have read them, the rules were explained by a teacher, they 'interpret' them, and they 'follow' them. This is not possible in the general case of language: if the rules of our language games were all explicit, they would always have to be *interpreted*, and hence they would presuppose *meaningful* expressions and hence language. An infinite regress looms.

Thus, the rules of language are bound to be non-explicit; they have to be somehow *implicit* to our language games. But can we make sense of an intrinsically implicit rule at all? It might seem that we could assimilate rules to regularities: we follow a rule in that we act regularly. However, this would erase any distinction between a stone falling ('following the rule of gravitation') and a man playing chess ('following the rules of chess') — a distinction which appears to be intuitively quite obvious. Moreover, *any* finite sequence of events is regular — in that it can be seen as the initial segment of a regular infinite sequence (in fact of infinitely many such sequences).

Wittgenstein therefore came to the dilemma which Brandom (1994: I.1.3) depicts as steering between the Scylla of 'regulism', maintaining that rules must be explicit, and the Charybdis of 'regularism', maintaining that rules are nothing more than regularities. Wittgenstein's considerations have initiated a huge industry of 'rule-following' studies, accelerated especially by Kripke's (1982) book.[2]

2. The rules of meaning

The later Wittgenstein was surely not alone in getting uneasy with a picture theory of language and the resulting representational semantics. His natural allies were, of course, pragmatists of all sorts: for a pragmatist wants to consider everything as a means to human ends, and so also linguistic expressions. She is hardly tempted to embrace any kind of a picture theory; she is bound to see language as an expedient of certain human doings, and meaning as the "cash-value" of a word, as Ayer (1978) has put it, using an expression of W. James. There are pragmatists in the narrow sense of the word such as James or Dewey, and there are pragmatists in a wider sense — as Brandom (2002) suggests — who endorse the primacy of the practical (the know-how) over the theoretical (the know-that); and these may also find the toolbox conception plausible. Hence Wittgenstein was far from being the only one to favor this conception and the ensuing *use-theory of meaning*. What was special about him was his emphasis on the concept of a rule. But even in this he was not alone — there was at least one other philosopher who became famous for his engagement in the enterprise of explaining language via explaining its rules, namely Wilfrid Sellars (see Peregrin 2006a). And it was Sellars' legacy that was picked up and elaborated by Brandom.

Now if it is *meaning* that we are after, then we need to know which particular kind of rules is constitutive of it — for there are various kinds of rules associated with our language games, many of which have obviously little to do with semantics. There are rules determining which strings are 'well-formed', i.e., serving as certain distinguished tokens of linguistic interactions, there are rules concerning what to say at the court and to say what if the president sits in the audience, etc. So if we want to get a grip on meaning, we need to single out the semantic ones.

Several philosophers have played with the idea that these may be the rules of inference. This idea is likely to strike a logician, for many *logical* words do seem to derive all their significance from the validity of the inferences they figure in: thus it seems that what it takes for a symbol '$\wedge$' to be a conjunction is the validity of the inferences from $A \wedge B$ to both A and B and from A and B together to $A \wedge B$.[3] But Sellars, and Brandom after him, have elevated this to a general paradigm:

according to them, the meaning of an expression is, we may say, its inferential role (see Peregrin 2001a: ch. 7).

To turn this into a theory of meaning, we have to give an account of how we are to understand the concept of *inference* in this context. Some statements are clearly inferable from others: thus *Fido is a mammal* from *Fido is a dog*. But what does it mean *to be inferable*? Can it mean that whoever entertains the former thought, or utters the corresponding sentence, goes on to entertain or utter the latter? Hardly. Perhaps then that she *should* go on to entertain or utter it? This does not seem plausible, too — not to mention the fact that the nature of the "should" used here would be as much in need of explanation as the concept of inference itself.

The key to understanding the nature of the Sellarsian and Brandomian notion of inference lies in understanding that the inferential rules we articulate are neither descriptions of regularities of human doings, nor prescriptions articulating how the human doings should proceed in an 'optimal' case. They do what the rules of chess do: they restrict the possibilities of our doings — thus constituting a space for a new kind of possibilities. They are *constraints*, or as Sellars was fond of putting it, "rules of criticism". Within chess, we are allowed to move pieces in a certain way only; and if we respect this, possibilities open up, for example the possibility to sacrifice a piece for a strong attack, etc. Within language, when we accept its rules, we can move in the space of meaningfulness, within which we can mean various things previously unavailable to us, we can communicate with others and think propositionally.[4]

Thus, if I say that we can correctly infer *Fido is a mammal* from *Fido is a dog*, I do not really say what we should do. I rather say what we *should not* do, namely assert that *Fido is a dog* and at the same time deny that *Fido is a mammal*. In this sense inference is, as Brandom points out, secondary to incompatibility. The rules tell us what we should *not* do; and we are free to move within its bounds. We can also investigate the 'outside' of the rules by slightly violating them, which may bring about, in the long run, meager changes of the rules resulting in the development of language.

However, *what kinds of entities* are rules and *where do they reside*? Brandom's answer is that they are instituted by our *normative attitudes*: we treat certain actions of our fellow human beings, especially their linguistic utterances, as *correct* or *incorrect*. What does it mean to treat something as correct or incorrect? It is supported by the tendency to call for or issue rewards and sanctions; but it is not something which would be translatable into a non-normative idiom. Therefore, Brandom thinks that to account for meanings, and consequently for thinking and agency, we irreducibly need the normative mode of speech (see Peregrin 2006b).

3. Linguistics: The (unfinished?) revolution

Let me now abandon the theme of the rules of language for a while and turn to a different topic — the revolutionary view of language urged by Noam Chomsky, gradually accepted by a large part of the linguistic and a slightly smaller part of the philosophical community. What I take to be the essential message of this revolution is that language must not be seen as an artifact or an invention like the steam engine or the theory of relativity, but rather as an *ability* (or an *instinct*, as Pinker (1994) puts it) that is to a large extent 'hard-wired' in our brains.

Chomsky implies that the traditional way of seeing language, to which most of us unconsciously (and some philosophers consciously) submit, is severely misleading; and that we cannot truly understand the nature of language if we do not manage to dispose of all such preconceptions. Thus it seems that we must forget our 'received wisdoms' and any prejudices which might have come to blur our vision of language.[5] Doing this and helping ourselves to the usual methods and results of natural sciences, we are, according to Chomsky, bound to arrive at the view of language which he is urging and which is very different from the one he takes to be standard among contemporary philosophers of language.

Now this seems to me to be utterly of a piece with the 'pragmatist turn' of the philosophy of language just outlined. Chomsky himself claims that semantics in the sense of the picture theory is something close to a chimera: "It is possible that natural language has only syntax and pragmatics", he says (1995: 26). This is precisely what the toolbox-theorists urge: semantics cannot but be a matter of the way we employ expressions, hence of what is traditionally referred to by the term "pragmatics". Therefore semantics cannot but be somehow parasitic on pragmatics — or, as Brandom (1994: 83) puts it, it must "answer to pragmatics" (see Peregrin 1999).

However, instead of a toolbox view of language and the ensuing use-theory of meaning, Chomsky votes for an "internalist approach to language", in which he, in effect, reinterprets the word "semantics" so as to refer to peculiar aspects of the components of his reconstruction of the language faculty. Thus Chomsky (1995: 19–20) claims:

> [S]ome features of … expressions … provide instructions … for conceptual-intentional systems; this element of the expression is usually called *logical form*. … The elements of [the logical form] can be called … "semantic" features […]. We may take the semantic features *S* of an expression *E* to be its *meaning*.

It is not easy to figure out exactly what Chomsky's "logical form" is supposed to be: in his probably most extensive work devoted to the philosophical background of his approach to language he says nothing any more explicit than that it is one level of the "structure of language" which constitutes "an interface between language and

other cognitive systems" and "yields the direct representation of meaning" (Chomsky 1986: 68).

What Chomsky appears to be doing here is simply substituting *the state of the meaning-knowing mind/brain* for *meaning*. Generative grammar, according to him, brought about "an important change of perspective: from the study of behavior and its products (such as texts), to the inner mechanisms that enter into thought and action" (Chomsky 2000: 5). But it should not go without saying that this "change of perspective" is also a change of *topic*.[6] The substantiation Chomsky claims for this move is that there is no scientifically respectable way of seizing the old topic, the 'folk concept' of meaning as something that an expression has, can acquire or lose, and that a speaker can learn, grasp or forget. But I cannot see that his response is any more warranted than substituting the study of the brains of the players of chess for the study of the game.[7]

Of course, when doing theoretical work we are not obliged to accept a folk notion of semantics in a dogmatic way. But the Chomskyan notion does not lead to such a revision. It leads to something that has nothing whatsoever to do with it. And it thus becomes doubtful whether it deserves to be called "semantics" at all. The trouble, as I see it, is that Chomsky's brilliant analysis of the syntactic aspect of language does not yield an equally acceptable theory of semantics. It would seem that his notion of meaning may make sense only when we utterly strip the term "meaning" of its usual sense. It leads to the dissolution of the concept of meaning within the concept of logical form which then is sometimes seen as a matter of a "language of thought" (Pinker 1994: ch. 3).

Moreover, this approach to semantics, apart from not squaring with the intuitive concept of meaning, seems to me to be *utterly* ill-conceived; in fact it appears to be an instance of what Ryle famously called *categorial mistake*:

> The theoretically interesting category-mistakes are those made by people who are perfectly competent to apply concepts, at least in the situations with which they are familiar, but are still liable in their abstract thinking to allocate those concepts to logical types to which they do not belong. … The representation of a person as a ghost mysteriously ensconced in a machine derives from this argument. Because, as is true, a person's thinking and purposive doing cannot be described solely in the idioms of physics, chemistry and physiology, therefore they must be described in counterpart idioms. As a human body is a complex organized unit, so the human mind must be another complex organized unit, though one made of a different sort of stuff and with a different sort of structure (Ryle 1949: 18).

I think this is precisely what is going on in many contemporary Chomskyan and post-Chomskyan semantic theories. As we have a profound and very successful theory of syntactic structures and as it is not directly applicable to semantics, it is

assumed that we must have a *parallel* theory of 'semantic structures' — structures parallel to, but different from the syntactic ones, and embodied in a quite different stuff. However, while syntax is essentially about structures (of expressions), semantics is about the meaning of the expressions thus structured, and also about the way meaning propagates along the syntactic structure (i.e., from compounds to composites or perhaps vice versa).[8] Hence urging the explanation of semantics in terms of a structure parallel to the syntactic one is, as I have expressed elsewhere (Peregrin 2001a: §10.2), like saying that as the description of boots consists in an account of their cut and material, we should describe the function of boots by revealing some 'cut and material of the way they are used'.

Hence I see the Chomskyan revolution as essentially unfinished, waiting to be carried over from the syntactic aspect of language to the semantic one — with the same fervor and especially in the same unprejudiced way. How? The answer would appear straightforward: if we are to see linguistic expressions as the means employed by our language faculty, then two kinds of questions arise: *which expressions do we use?* and *how, i.e., for what ends and with what effect, do we use them?* The former are the *syntactic* questions, questions about which expressions are grammatically well-formed. The latter are the *semantic* — or we should rather say *semantico-pragmatic* — ones, questions concerning significance and meaning (see also Peregrin 1999). In this way we by-pass the traditional questions of referring, denoting, etc., which Chomsky (I think rightly) sees as artificial.[9] Hence what seems to me to be continuous with the Chomskyan upheaval is not the kind of semantics which is now current among his followers (which concentrates on various kinds of semantic structures or 'logical forms'), but rather some kind of 'use-theory of meaning'.

This is to say that given an expression, we can study how the expression consists of sub-expressions and how it is capable of becoming part of super-expressions; and we can also study what happens when people actually utter it, what kinds of changes its utterances are likely to bring about. This agenda agrees with the Chomskyan one in that it is an enterprise naturalistic through and through; however it is essentially externalist — we do not study (only) human minds or brains, but interactions between speakers and their environment.

4. Studying minds (and their language faculties)

As made plain in the beginning of this paper, the version of the use-theory of meaning I follow Brandom in aiming at, is a *normative* one. I claim that we should not aim at an account of regularities of linguistic conduct, but of *rules* 'underlying'

it — which are to be reconstructed on the basis of recording the regularities of our normative attitudes to linguistic conduct. And this might appear to be incompatible with Chomskyan naturalism. But I do not think it really is. (Though Brandom himself expressly rejects naturalism and declares himself to be a *rationalist* – see, e.g., his introduction to Brandom 2000; and see also my criticism in Peregrin 2001b.)

What conceptual resources do we generally need to account for the semantic aspect of language? Thinkers so different as Chomsky and Quine concur in claiming that we do not need anything more than what we need for accounting for the rest of the world: hence more or less the language of physics. But the fact is that in describing the semantic aspect of language we begin to move into the vicinity of describing minds (which is not to be read as involving the claim that meanings are mental entities! — but the concepts of a *language-using creature* and a *creature with a mind* appear to be closely connected), and in describing minds we actually *do* use a conceptual apparatus different from what we use when describing the mindless world. We talk about minds as containing thoughts, feelings and intentions and we talk about the actions of creatures with minds as being brought about by these contents of their minds.

Whereas Quine appears to take the concept of physicalism to be straightforward and not very problematic, Chomsky (1995) duly stresses the difficulties of specifying what the "language of physics" really is. For him, the concept of "physicalism" is vague to the point of vanity. It would seem to follow that "naturalism" cannot be characterized but very vaguely: as something like 'a devotion to the spirit of the methods of the sciences.' From this point of view, the stress Chomsky puts on the divide between naturalism and the rest appears to be overloaded. He insists that there is no reason to approach minds with a conceptual apparatus essentially different from that established by natural sciences; and he urges naturalism as the opposite to "the doctrine that in the quest for theoretical understanding, language and mind are to be studied in some manner other than the ways we investigate natural objects as a matter of principle" (Chomsky 1995: 28). But this is queer: it could hardly be denied that we study some "natural objects" (say, animals) in a manner which is *to some extent* different from that in which we study other such objects (say, stones). And it is to be expected that studying the specific animals of our own kind, and especially in connection with terms like "mind", "consciousness", "reason" and also "language", will call for other specific methods and concepts. And why, or at exactly which point, must this incur our departure from naturalism?

But perhaps the crux of what Chomsky urges lies in the phrase "as a matter of principle". Well, it is surely possible to agree that if someone insists that language and mind must be studied in a certain way *before* she pays *any* attention to their

real nature, we would reject such a view. (Chomsky (1995) quotes philosophers who appear to be on the verge of saying that a certain approach to language follows from the nature of philosophy alone, irrespectively of the nature of language.) However, in such a case it would be apt to talk about a *prejudice* rather than about a departure from naturalism. Prejudices are to be despised. But I think it is also a prejudice to insist that studying mind and language cannot lead to a legitimate need for methods or concepts not previously employed within the enterprise of the study of nature.

Physicalists appear to think that any kind of 'folk psychology', with its feelings, thoughts or intentions, should be construed (if not wholly discarded) as shorthand for speaking of physical reality, and be translatable into the language of natural sciences. But there are people who disagree. Davidson (1970, and elsewhere), for one, argues that there are good reasons for having two different and mutually irreducible conceptual systems, one for mindless things and another for minded agents. The reason, according to him, is that we aim at strict natural laws when making sense of the former, whereas for the latter we aim at something a little less cut and dried. We do not expect to be able to predict the behavior of fellow people in the way we predict the behavior of much simpler things. Dennett (1987) talks about the *intentional stance*: as people are physical systems too complicated to be understood as such, we have devised a different — less reliable, but practically very useful — way of 'understanding' them. We have come to see that if we ascribe thoughts, intentions, etc. to them, and if we assume that they follow such 'laws' as that of the practical syllogism, we are able to make sense of what they do in so far as we are able to make very qualified estimates of their behavior (and of course to talk to and otherwise cope with them). And, Dennett concludes, if having thoughts, intentions etc. is what is needed to explain their behavior, then there is no reason to say that these entities are 'not really there'.

We have seen that Brandom follows a related — yet different — train of thought. He also thinks that we need specific linguistic resources to account for meanings and minds. But he does not think that this should be seen primarily as a matter of new *concepts*; it is rather that of a different *mode* of speech, namely the *normative* mode. Hence his idea is that when speaking of minds and meanings we are forced to talk not about *what there is*, but rather what there *should be*.

This might sound, *prima facie*, weird. When I say what a word means, in what sense do I not speak about what there is? The key to an answer lies in the rule-following considerations we tackled above. If these are right, then an expression may be meaningful only as a consequence of being subject to a collection of rules (just like a piece of wood becomes a chess king by being subject to certain rules

of chess). Hence to say what an expression means is to spell out certain rules, and citing rules is saying what *should* (or *should not*) be done.

5. Rules and rule-following

I doubt that anyone would dream of explaining what it takes to be a chess king without talking about how one *should* move it or how it is *correct* to do so. And it should be equally uncontroversial that to say what it takes for a sound- or inscription-type to mean thus-and-so is to say that the item *should* be used in a certain way. (Let us again stress that these *should*s do not indicate that people are to do something in a specific way, but rather that they are to *avoid* certain ways of doing it — thus delimiting a space between the ensuing crash barriers.)

Brandom claims that the *should* arises from our normative attitudes, the attitudes we assume towards our fellows' doings and especially utterings. We, as a matter of fact, have come to take our own and others' utterances as correct or incorrect (on various levels and in various senses); we reward those who do the correct things and sanction those who do not (again in various senses — from arresting oath-breakers to treating those who do not use words in a way which makes sense to us, as non-members of our linguistic community).

The rules and hence the sort of correctness, which is distinctively semantic, rest, according to Brandom, on the institutions of *commitments* and *entitlements*. By making linguistic utterances we commit ourselves to various things — by making a promise we commit ourselves to doing what we promise, by making an assertion we commit ourselves to justifying it, to giving our reasons for holding it, should it be challenged. We also offer entitlements: by giving permission we entitle the addressee to do what we permit him to do, whereas by making an assertion we entitle the addressee to reassert the claim and to defer its justification to us.

Now, according to Brandom — and this may be the most controversial part of his theory — it is asserting and the related cluster of practices of "giving and asking for reasons" that is crucial from the viewpoint of semantics. That asserting, as 'saying what there is', assumes a prominent position within the picture conception of language is obvious; but it is much less obvious that it should retain it even within the framework of the toolbox conception.

Brandom's idea appears to be that what makes our language crucially different from, e.g., the communication systems of other animals is precisely its suitability for the "giving and asking for reasons", and its consequent *inferential articulation*, i.e., the fact that each expression must be part of some statements which entail further statements and are themselves entailed by others.

This means that, from both the Wittgensteinian and the Brandomian viewpoint, to understand language we have to understand the concepts of a linguistic rule and of following a rule. Chomsky (1995: 34ff.) appears to think that we do not need any such concept beyond that of a regularity and that we can reduce the concept of rule-following to the concept of regular behavior. He sees no principled difference between a man following grammatical rules hard-wired to his brain and a hypothetical Martian lacking this wiring and following the same rules by virtue of his explicit mastering of a theory. But it is hard to believe that he would want to claim that there is no difference between a stone's following the law of gravitation by falling with acceleration *g* and a person steering her car in a certain way because she consciously follows the rules of traffic (or, for that matter, between a person who follows the rules of traffic subconsciously and another who thinks about them).[10]

6. Studying language (and the meanings of its expressions)

From the viewpoint just outlined, studying semantics is studying inferential rules of language. How, then, does the good old concept of meaning fare within this new environment?

On any variety of a picture theory (and here I mean both what I called the 'ontologico-semiotic' and the 'psychologico-semiotic' theories — see Peregrin 2000; 2001a: ch. 2), there is a piece of the world to which a typical meaningful expression is somehow intimately related (though the theories may vary wildly as to the nature of the piece); and meaningfulness consists in this very relationship. To do semantics, then, is to find out what this very chunk of the world consists in. On the other hand, the toolbox conception of language does not tempt us to see meaningfulness as a relation to an object or a state of affairs; for we see it as consisting in the expression's being employed in a certain way, or perhaps being governed by certain rules.

I want to claim — and here I am not sure whether I am still following Brandom — that even in this setting we should not let the concept of meaning go by the board; though we should now see it as more of a *tool* for doing semantic theory than as its *subject matter*. To get a glimpse of how semantics looks when seen from this perspective, it is good to assume the stance of somebody who wrestles with an utterly unknown language. This is the setting of the notorious thought experiment of radical translation or radical interpretation, proposed by Quine (1960) and elaborated by Davidson (1984). How useful does the concept of meaning appear in this setting?

It seems to be clear that when we observe an unknown linguistic community, we gradually come to realize that its members tend to use some kinds of linguistic tokens (i.e., sentences) in certain situations for certain purposes, and others in other circumstances for other purposes. The learning and appreciating of these differences is usually described as learning what these sentences mean. Moreover, as we encounter ever new sentences, sentences never heard before, there is no way to master them save by discovering the *syntax* of the language (a task which we accomplish, if Chomsky is right, almost effortlessly) and disclosing the roles of lexical items — i.e., discovering *their* general usage. (Reference, for that matter, then comes out as a concept auxiliary to this quest for meaning — a lot of words play a specific kind of role which we know very well from our own language and which has come to be called *referring to something*.)

Chomsky does not think that the traditional concept of meaning is of much use. "Communication", he claims (1993: 21), "does not require shared 'public meanings' any more than it requires 'public pronunciations'. Nor need we assume that the 'meanings' (or 'sounds') of one participant be discoverable by the other".[11] And: "From the natural language and common-sense concepts of *reference* and the like, we can extract no relevant 'relation' between our words and things in the world" (1995: 44). Hence Chomsky denies any relevance of the concept of "shared meanings" and also of any other traditional concepts characterizing the language-world relationship. (As for meanings, he again concurs with Quine (1992: ch. 3), who sees the concept as a "stumbling block cleared away".).

My opinion, on the contrary, is that language and communication can exist only insofar as there are "shared public meanings". This is, however, not to say that people speaking the same language always (or frequently) mean the same by the same word; it is to say that I can *communicate* with somebody only insofar as she can *interpret* me — in other words, share the meanings of my words with me. Chomsky (1993: 21) is certainly right when he stresses that "communication is a more-or-less matter" — and so is meaning. But I do not think that it follows that we should dispense with the concept of meaning altogether. Let me explain why.

The point of departure of radical interpretation is the situation in which we observe the natives and their linguistic behavior, and we set out to make sense of it. We notice that their utterances display certain regularities, and some of them also covariances with the circumstances in which they are produced. We also notice regularities in the ways the natives approve or disapprove of the utterances of their fellow speakers (and we are likely to soon move into the position of suggesting utterances ourselves and urging the approval or disapproval — 'assent' or 'dissent' — from the natives). On this basis, we try to conjecture the rules of their language games and the roles these rules confer on their sentences and, consequently, their words.

It is almost certain that we can never capture the whole of the employment of a word — and this is not even our task, for what we are after are *circumstance-invariant* rules and the roles of words as determined by *such* rules. We are happy to see some features of the way a word gets actually employed as not directly a matter of these rules, but a matter of either occasional *violations* of the rules, or of the idiosyncratic strategies of the speakers. What we are aiming at is a kind of *ex pluribus unum* — a *Gestalt* that may be seen as ordering our data into something "intelligible". It is clear that the emerging *Gestalt* is not determined uniquely by the data — any boundary we posit between circumstance-invariant and hence meaning-conferring rules and the rest of the determinants of linguistic traffic is notoriously vague and fuzzy. And this is not only a matter of our drawing conclusions from restricted evidence — the boundary between the 'meaning-giving' part of the usage of a word and its 'fact-stating' part is *essentially* fuzzy. It is, in fact, the notorious boundary between the analytic and the synthetic, which Quine (1952) rightly diagnosed as non-existent. It follows that meaning itself is fuzzy, a "more-or-less matter".

However, it is one thing to say that meaning is a more-or-less matter, and quite another to say that there is no such thing as meaning. After all, *everything* within the real world is a more-or-less matter. There are, for example, no 'true' spheres and no 'true' cubes in the real world, and yet we make extended use of geometry, regarding many things around us as spheres or cubes. And similarly it may be useful to see meanings as objects — despite the fact that this involves an amount of idealization (Peregrin 2000; 2001a: ch. 9). True, we must be wary of the thought that meanings are things-in-the-world christened by words; but once we are clear about their real nature, there seems to be no reason not to bring the objectifying drift of our minds to bear on them.

When a speaker *X* utters a statement *s*, then the way we normally *perceive* this is that *X* has a belief *b* and this belief is expressed by *s*. Hence what we ordinarily — quite subconsciously — do is 'decompose' the body of facts about the natives' utterances into a theory of what the speakers believe and a theory of what their words mean — and we use meanings, as Davidson (1989) stressed, as something like our 'measuring units' to account for our findings just like a natural scientist would use hers. This implies that the decomposition is, in fact, stipulated by the *interpreter*, although she is surely not *free* to posit it wherever she wants. (She has to draw it so as to create a *Gestalt* as helpful as possible for the enterprise of *seeing* what the natives are saying.) But it seems to me that she truly *perceives* the linguistic conduct 'in terms' of meanings.[12]

7. Conclusion

I think that what both Chomsky and the 'toolbox-theorists' urge is a kind of 'pragmatist turn'. We should not see language as a system of names denoting objects, but rather as an expedient or vehicle of a certain human activity. Hence we should see semantics as 'embedded' within pragmatics — or, as Brandom puts it, see semantics as answering to pragmatics. And we should study the semantic(-pragmatic) aspect of language in a way which is continuous with how we study other human activities and the rest of the world in general.

However, I do not think Chomsky or his followers have offered a theory of semantics which is true to this spirit. Instead of trying to explicate "semantics" in terms of structures yielded by the extrapolation of Chomsky's theory of syntax, I think we should settle for a use theory of meaning, i.e., a theory according to which the meaning of an expression amounts to the role the expression plays within our linguistic transactions.

Moreover, I am convinced that our linguistic practices are characterized by the fact that they are rule-governed (in the sense in which a game like chess is rule-governed — i.e., as having constraints of the kind of "you-should-not" which create a 'space of possibilities', in this case the space of meaningfulness). Therefore, we have to study the rules of language; and, if what we are after is meaning, especially the rules of inference. And this — to my understanding — is the very thing Brandom does.

Notes

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1. Of course it can happen that some people take it to be a name *by mistake*; but taken to be a name *generally and regularly* simply *is what it is* to be a name.

2. See, e.g., Baker and Hacker (1984), McDowell (1984), Wright (1989), or Boghossian (1989). An exceptionally illuminating discussion of these matters is given by Blackburn (1984).

3. The inferential characterization of logical constants has been elaborated especially within the theory of 'natural deduction' (see Prawitz 1965).

4. As for the role of propositional thinking, see also Davidson (1999).

5. Which are, as Wittgenstein (1953: §103) put it, "like a pair of glasses on our nose through which we see whatever we look at".

6. A related, but separate problem is noted by Stekeler-Weithofer (2001: 120): "Cases of 'higher' forms of cognition cannot be *identified* with a mere physiological, or animal *precondition* for displaying a competence in particular performances", for these preconditions are "only a *condition without not*, they do not explain the competence in question".

7. Chomsky (2000: 165–166) contrasts two kinds of generalizations concerning language: the kind exemplified by generalizations concerning "what infants know", which are explained in terms of "inner states", with the one exemplified by the observation that if someone wants *X*, thinks that obtaining *X* requires doing *Y*, and is easily capable of doing *Y*, then he will typically do *Y*. While Chomsky is certainly right that the latter, in contrast to the former, does not directly lead to a scientific research program, to claim, as he does, that the latter lacks "empirical content" seems preposterous. It seems to me that we do form and verify the latter kind of generalizations all the time — and in fact I cannot imagine how one could *understand* one's fellow agents and predict their behavior without their help. Thus I agree with Davidson (1970) that though "such accounts of intentional behavior operate in a conceptual framework removed from the direct reach of physical law", they are none the less not only indispensable, but also theoretically interesting.

8. This is not to rule out the feasibility of something like a semantic structure; but a theory of such structures is not yet semantics, it might at most be instrumental to it. There is no doubt that "logical forms" play a vital role within Chomsky's well established theory of the language faculty — the objection is that its investigation is not the investigation of *meaning*.

9. Again, this is not to rule out the feasibility of these concepts within a theory of language; it is only to say that they should not play the foundational role they play within many contemporary theories (see, e.g., Devitt and Sterelny 1987).

10. Chomsky might well be right that this difference is not usefully elucidated in terms of an "access to consciousness", but denying it altogether seems to fly in the face of reason.

11. The comparison to "pronunciations" and "sounds" seems strange: surely talk about "communication" makes sense only when there are sounds which are acknowledged ("discovered") by an audience, and hence are in this sense "public".

12. Seen from this perspective, the character of the pronouncement 'the meaning of *s* is such-and-such' is not dissimilar from that of 'the (real) price of *x* is such-and-such'. Just as 'the price of *x* is such-and-such' is to be understood as a shorthand for 'the position of *x* within the selling-and-buying relations among people is such-and-such', 'the meaning of *s* is such-and-such' should be construed as saying 'the way *s* gets employed within the language game to which it belongs is substantially such-and-such'. Both meaning and price may sometimes be fixed by some explicit act (and in such a case the meaning or the price becomes something which *is* discoverable by natural-scientific methods); however, in the typical case both are a matter of finding an 'equilibrium' of a number of intersecting relationships, i.e. of an interpretation. Thus we can talk about meaning only from the viewpoint of an interpreter, of someone who observes the relevant environment and 'calculates' the relevant value out of it. Therefore Sellars (1974) speaks about "meaning as a functional classification".

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The father, the son, and the daughter

Sellars, Brandom, and Millikan

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The positions of Brandom and Millikan are compared with respect to their common origins in the works of Wilfrid Sellars and Wittgenstein. Millikan takes more seriously the "picturing" themes from Sellars and Wittgenstein. Brandom follows Sellars more closely in deriving the normativity of language from social practice, although there are also hints of a possible derivation from evolutionary theory in Sellars. An important claim common to Brandom and Millikan is that there are no representations without function or "attitude".

Keywords: Conceptual role, conceptualizing, convention, cooperation, function, intentionality, isomorphism, mechanism, normative, pattern, practice, scientific realism

Brandom and I were both Sellars students, yet large differences have arisen between us. How have two siblings, both admirers of the father, come to stand so far apart? Which of us has abandoned the faith? Or was there a crack in Sellars' own position into which we have but driven a wedge?

It was with the latter in mind that I first approached this essay. I thought that a crack might lie in the bridge that Sellars attempted to build between Wittgenstein's (1921) *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and his (1953) *Philosophical Investigations*, both of which works Sellars admired greatly and which he claimed were not incompatible in basic measure. Certainly there are *Tractarian* themes in Sellars that only I have pursued and themes from the *Investigations* that only Brandom has pursued. I have pursued the picturing themes from the *Tractatus* that were carried through in Sellars' discussions of that causal-order relation between language and the world that he called "representing" (e.g., Sellars 1963a, Sellars 1979: ch. 5). Also in his unique interpretation of Kant, according to which the phenomenal world is abstractly isomorphic to the world in itself. Brandom has followed Sellars' interest in the language games metaphor from *Philosophical Investigations*, expressed in

Sellars as a form of inferential role semantics and in the thesis that one learns to think only as one learns to abide by the rules of a language. But on inspection there is, at least, no obvious crack in the bridge Sellars built between the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*.

Indeed, Sellars went to great pains to explain exactly how inferential role semantics was consistent with Tractarian picturing. The idea was, roughly, that in an individual's or a community's following the rules of a language, the language being largely internalized as thought, a very abstract map of the world was in the process of construction:

> A language, in its primary mode of being, simply *is* the pattern of beliefs, inferences and intentions … (Sellars 1979: 129); …in my account, the *manner* in which the names 'occur' in the 'picture' is not a conventional symbol for the *manner* in which the objects occur in the world, limited only by the abstract condition that the picture of an *n*-adic fact be itself an *n*-adic fact. Rather, as I see it, the manner in which the names occur in the picture is a projection, in accordance with a fantastically complex system of rules of projection, of the manner in which the objects occur in the world (Sellars 1963a: 215; 1979: 139).

These fantastic complexities are introduced mainly by the inference rules, formal and, more importantly, material, that govern "statement-statement" (hence judgment-judgment) transitions. Just as "the generalizations in question do not, so to speak, *separately* relate 'red' to red things and 'man' to men [but] relate *sentential* expressions containing 'red' to red things and *sentential* expressions containing 'man' to men" (Sellars 1979: 70), so "the representational features of an empirical language require the presence in the language of a [whole] schematic world story" (p. 128). The map of the world produced by a language is not found sentence by sentence but only in the whole of the living *language cum thought* running isomorphic to the whole world in sketch. If there is a crack in the Sellarsian foundation, this is not where it lies, or anyway not precisely.

Where there may be a crack, however, is in Sellars' treatment of the nature of linguistic rules and the relation of these to conceptual roles and thus to intentionality. Conceptual roles, for Sellars (as for Quine) were internalized patterns of linguistic response, responses to the world with words, responses to words with more words, and responses to words with overt actions. These patterns were not merely patterns in fact, however, patterns actually engaged in by thinkers, speakers and hearers. Sellars took linguistic rules to be normative rather than merely descriptive of regularities. Moreover, they were normative in a very strong prescriptive or evaluative sense. He was fond of saying that these rules were "fraught with ought". They prescribed regularities rather than merely describing them. He also compared these rules to the rules of a game (such as chess) in which conventionally

allowable moves are made, the outcomes of which get counted, in accordance with further conventions, as having certain results. (Moving your rook to make that kind of configuration counts as putting my king in check.) His understanding of linguistic rules thus made contact with theories of speech acts that take these to be wholly conventional in the sense that acts of this sort could not be performed at all were there no conventions for performing them. The relevant norms are essentially social in origin and function.

On these various points about linguistic rules, I think that Brandom pretty much agrees. True, he prefers to speak of "practices" rather than "conventions", but that is because others have analyzed the notion "convention" as though all conventions rested on complexes of prior beliefs, reasons and intentions, and Brandom, like Sellars, holds that beliefs, reasons and intentions are themselves made possible only as a result of the relevant practices (Brandom 1994: 232–233). An obvious question concerns the relation of normative rules governing language and thought to actual regularities (hence to the actual picturing) found in language and thought. Sellars held that the linguistic rules were inculcated in children by socialization, which he took to be achieved by conditioning. Conditioning at first produces merely "pattern governed behavior", but ultimately, through the introduction of metalinguistic patterns, also "rule obeying behavior".

> To learn pattern governed behavior is to become conditioned to arrange perceptible elements into patterns and to form these, in turn, into more complex patterns and sequences of patterns. Presumably, such learning is capable of explanation in S-R reinforcement terms, the organism coming to respond to patterns as wholes through being (among other things) rewarded when it completes gappy instances of these patterns. Pattern governed behavior of the kind we should call 'linguistic' involves 'positions' and 'moves' of the sort that *would be* specified by 'formation' and 'transformation' rules in its metagame if it *were* rule obeying behavior (Sellars 1963a: 327).

It is not in the first instance rule obeying behavior, however, because the young child does not yet conceptualize the rules that it follows. Conceptualizing the rules is achieved by coming to use metalinguistic normative forms:

> [W]hat we need is a distinction between 'pattern governed' and 'rule obeying' behavior, the latter being a more complex phenomenon which involves, but is not to be identified with, the former. Rule obeying behavior contains, in some sense, both a game and a metagame, the latter being the game in which belong the rules obeyed in playing the former game as a piece of rule obeying behavior (Sellars 1963a: 327); Learning the use of normative expressions involves…acquiring the tendency to make the transition from 'I ought now to do A' to the doing of A…it could not be true of a word that 'it means *ought*' unless this word had motivating force in the language to which it belongs (p. 350).

Thus normative rules, for Sellars, are not translatable into non-normative terms. Accepting a normative rule is not believing a fact but tending to be motivated in a certain way. Similarly, the work that the thought "now fetch some water!" does within one's psychology is not the work of a belief but the work of tending to cause one to fetch some water.

On the other hand, although to accept a norm is not just to know a fact, on Sellars' view the presence of normative rules in the natural world appears in the end as just one more level of fact in that world. From the scientific realist's standpoint, you can understand the nature of the normative practices of a community without participating in them. Similarly, although Sellars insists that the use of semantic and logical terms engages one in certain community practices, in semantic assessment and so forth, it is also possible to understand what the functions of semantic and logical terms and statements are apart from being oneself engaged. You can understand these statements without participating in the practice of semantic assessment. It is one thing to *use* semantic language, for example, to say and mean or to understand "'rot' means red". But you can also *describe* the use of semantic language without using it. You can *describe* what patterns of response in a language community, along with the origins of these responses in a history of language training, and training of the language trainers, and so forth, constitutes that 'rot' means *red* in that community. You can understand what the "means" rubric does without indulging in it. You can understand specific forms of semantic assessment without participating in the particular practices being examined. There are *truth conditions* for "'rot' means red" of a perfectly ordinary, if very complicated sort. It's just that it's not the job of the sentence "'rot' means *red*" to impart the information that these truth conditions hold. Rather, its job is to get one to use 'rot' as one already knows to use "red".

Putting things bluntly, it seems that Sellars understands accepting semantic norms as merely displaying certain dispositions, dispositions to make certain moves in language and thought and dispositions to sanction these moves in others. Brandom claims that this sort of analysis will not do.

> There clearly are socially instituted norms of this sort. Whatever the Kwakiutl treat as an appropriate greeting gesture for their tribe, or as a correctly constructed ceremonial hut, is one; it makes no sense to suppose that they could be collectively wrong about this sort of thing. The question is whether *conceptual* norms ought to be understood as of this type (Brandom 1994: 53).

In the case of conceptual norms,

> …assessing, sanctioning, is itself something that can be done correctly or incorrectly (Brandom 1994: 36); [d]efining normative attitudes in terms of dispositions to apply sanctions does not by itself reduce the normative to the nonnormative

> — it just trades off one sort of norm for another (p. 42); …contents conferred on sentences by the score keeping practices I describe are not equivalent to the contents of any claims about what *anyone takes* to be true… their truth does not reduce to what I, or anyone else, or even *everyone* is or would be disposed to claim … (Brandom 1997: 202); … a cardinal criterion of adequacy of any account of the *conceptual* norms implicit in discursive practice is that it makes intelligible their objectivity" (Brandom 1994: 63).

On a dispositional account of semantic norms we could not make sense of the fact, for example, that "it could be true that the sun will collapse whether or not everyone always thinks that it won't" (ibid.).

Brandom concludes that there must be "disposition transcendent conceptual norms" and takes on as his central project to explain how this can be so. The alternative he sees to reducing the normative to dispositional terms is to posit that it's "norms all the way down". In setting out this position he remains committed to the Sellarsian view that the rules of language and norms of thought are instituted in public "practice": "…only communities, not individuals, can be interpreted as having original intentionality. …the practices that institute the sort of normative status characteristic of intentional states must be *social* practices" (Brandom 1994: 61).

Now I agree with Brandom that conceptual norms must be disposition transcendent, hence with his rejection of Sellars' view of norms as derived from meta-dispositions to sanction. One wonders, however, whether the game metaphor with talk of "score keeping" is really worth preserving after this insight, why it will not just prove misleading. Surely if everyone counts a certain move in chess as producing check mate, or a certain move in basketball as scoring two points, "it makes no sense to suppose that they could be collectively wrong" about these matters. There must be a deep divide between language and ordinary games that we should try not to obscure with a metaphor but instead to keep in full view.

Indeed, there is a competing theme in Sellars' discussion of linguistic rules that seems both to introduce these rules as disposition transcendent and to compete with the idea that these rules are at all like the rules of a game. He characterizes his position in part as follows:

> [W]hen you describe the process whereby we come to adopt the language of which [some inferential] move is a part, you give an *anthropological*, a (very schematic) *causal* account of how language came to be used…in which you stress evolutionary analogies and cite the language of the beehive (Sellars 1963a: 353).

In the case of bees,

> a. The pattern (dance) is first exemplified by particular bees in a way which is *not* appropriately described by saying that the successive acts by which the pattern is realized occur *because of the pattern*.

b. Having a 'wiring diagram' which expresses itself in this pattern has survival value.
c. Through the mechanisms of heredity and natural selection it comes about that all bees have this 'wiring diagram' (Sellars 1963a: 326).

In the case of humans "… the phenomena of learning present interesting analogies to the evolution of species … with new behavioral tendencies playing the role of mutations, and the 'law of effect' the role of natural selection" (p. 327).

The analogy with bee dances retains the theme that conforming to the rules of a language is an intrinsically social activity. A bee dance is of use only if sister bees watch it and follow its direction. But the implication is clear that coming to follow the patterns prescribed by the rules of one's language community is not *just* a game but has some broader utility for the child or for its community. It has a value beyond that of displaying certain social graces (say, as in playing a decent game of chess or bridge in some social circles). Moreover, it is hard to believe that Sellars has overlooked that a bee dance is a tiny map of the location of some nectar. The bee dance not only has utility for the bees, but the fact that it maps the location of nectar by a certain rule of projection helps to explain *why* or *how* it can have this utility. It helps to explain the mechanism involved.

It is this second and, I believe, opposing metaphor of Sellars' that I have adopted in my work. The norms for language are uses that have had "survival value", as Sellars put it. As such these norms are indeed disposition transcendent, but they are not fraught with ought. They are not prescriptive or evaluative norms. Their status has nothing to do with anyone's assessments. A norm is merely a measure from which actual facts can depart; it need not be an evaluative measure. A mere average, after all, is also a kind of norm. Behavioral forms that have had past survival value are a measure from which actual behavioral dispositions, both past and present, can depart, but such departures are in no sense proscribed. Indeed, departures sometimes prove advantageous. What a biological or psychological or social form has been selected for doing, through natural selection, through learning, or through selection for social transmission, is a norm against which the form's actual performances can be measured. It is the "natural purpose" of the form to fulfill this function, purposes, like norms, being *essentially* things that are not always fulfilled. "Contingencies may block the road of inquiry, yet truth (adequacy of representation [mapping]) abides as the *would be* of linguistic representation" (Sellars 1979: 130).

The possibility of departure is built into the very notion of a *would be* or purpose. But to say that a natural purpose has not been fulfilled is to proffer an ostensible fact, not an assessment.

Looking carefully for the natural purposes of language and thought, however, reveals that these purposes cannot be all on one level. Both Sellars and Brandom

see language and thought as a seamless whole. For Sellars, thought is just as inseparable from its expression in language as language is from the thought it expresses; the functional roles of language and thought each extend to include the other. For Brandom, the objectivity of conceptual norms derives from public linguistic practice. The original impulse for this idea comes from the *Philosophical Investigations*, in the claim that the criterion for having followed a rule can only be public agreement. And surely something analogous to public agreement is required to keep the bees dancing. But if we ask whether the survival value of the concepts we acquire from learning a language are at root benefits gained only through the community by means of social cooperation, the answer seems to be no. Clearly there are benefits to the isolated individual as well. Conforming to the semantic rules embodied in a language is not just a social activity, of use only within a society. If learning a language is learning to think, having learned a language will also come in handy on Robinson Crusoe's island, with or without assistance from Man Friday. Playing a conceptual game of solitaire must also have its advantages. But then there must exist standards of conceptual clarity accessible within individuals apart from the language community, standards by which merely wrestling with nature determines when a useful conceptual pattern has been formed. Whether one's thought is well formed has a criterion that also applies when one is alone in one's workshop. The bee that dances correctly can follow its own dance to nectar.

It need not follow that the functions of language derive from functions that thought intends for language. We need not follow Stalnaker in "dividing up the fundamental orientations of various approaches to intentionality, accordingly as rational agency or linguistic capacity is taken as primary" (Brandom 1994: 149). If language and thought do not form a seamless whole, that doesn't have to mean that either Grice is right and the intentionality of language derives from that of thought, or that Wittgenstein is right and the intentionality of thought derives from that of language. Selection takes place on various levels. Most obviously there is selection of genes, selection of behaviors by conditioning and by trial and error learning, and selection of traits and behaviors for social transmission. Each of these levels produces its own yield of natural purposes. The selection of language forms takes place on the social level. Language survives when it serves cooperative functions often enough, functions that reward at once both speakers and hearers (though they may often be rewarded at the end in different ways). Language forms proliferate when aiding speaker and hearer cooperation on common projects, typically, the sharing of information speaker and hearer have a mutual interest in sharing or the coordinating of projects and activities they have a mutual interest in advancing. Languaging is something that it takes a pair of people to do; both must be purposefully involved. Completed speech acts of a kind that have survival value

are not the work of a speaker alone, but of a hearer purposefully cooperating with a speaker. Purposeful doings need not be confused with doings guided by intentions, however. There is purpose in what the kidneys do and purpose in the exhibition of behaviors resulting from conditioning. That producing beliefs or desires in a hearer is often part of the natural purpose of language use, both a purpose of the speaker's speaking and a purpose of the hearer's reaction in understanding, does not require that either speaker or hearer have intentions concerning beliefs or desires or, indeed, so much as concepts of beliefs and desires (Millikan 1984: ch. 3; 2004: ch. 9). Surely Sellars was right that speaking comes before thought about thought (Sellars 1963b).

To say that the use of language results in acts of a special kind that it would be impossible in principle to perform outside of the conventions or the practice of language use is misleading however. In its cooperative way, language accomplishes perfectly natural things. For example, doing something that produces a certain belief or intention in another is a perfectly ordinary thing to do. That it can be done cooperatively through the use of language does not change this matter. Conventions, on this view, are merely ways of doing things that are proliferated by being reproduced, and that exhibit a certain arbitrariness of form. They are reproduced patterns that proliferate due partly to weight of precedent, rather than due, for example, to intrinsic superiority (Millikan 1998). The conventions of language do not create any new kinds of action effects. Language conventions are best thought of merely as lineages of behavioral patterns involving a speaker's utterance and a hearer's response. They do not correspond to rules, and certainly not to prescriptive rules. It is true that many conventions are ways of doing things to which one ought to conform, given that there are such conventions. For example, conventions about which side to drive on and whether to stop at the red or the green lights are conventions with which one ought to conform. Moreover, in traditional cultures, doing things in unconventional ways is often proscribed quite generally. But this evaluative kind of normativity is something added to mere conventionality. Decorating for Christmas with red and green is conventional, but surely in no way required. Conforming to the conventions, engaging in the linguistic practices of the community in which one lives is, in the main, merely a practical matter. Mainly it concerns how to accomplish certain practical tasks in a given environment (ibid.).

But as Brandom has said, "a cardinal criterion of adequacy of any account of the conceptual norms … must make intelligible their objectivity" (Brandom 1994: 63). How do we do that without appealing to linguistic practice? By what objective criterion can one be following a rule of thought privately, following in a way that no one else will assess or, indeed, even notice or care about? What objective criterion

determines that one is using a dog thought only in response to dogs or that one's dog thoughts always correspond even to the same kind of thing?[1]

I adopt Sellars' suggestion that adequate intentional representing is a kind of picturing or mapping. And I adopt his suggestion that this picturing or mapping may have immediate practical uses, as when one bee makes a dance-map that guides another toward nectar. The suggestion is then that the functions of both bees might be realized within the same brainwork, one part of the network making maps of the world that will guide the other in directing behaviors for navigating that world. This first and simplest model for cognition gives us perception directly for action, perception-action cycles, roughly as conceived by Gibsonians. Representations or "icons" that directly mediate between perception and action I call "pushmi-pullyu" representations. Like the bee dance, they tell at the same time what the case is with some part of the world and direct what to do about it. Behaviors of the very simplest animals are governed by pushmi-pullyus of this kind, as are myriad automatic responses of humans to the most immediate environmental contingencies facing them such as being off balance or needing to navigate rough or smooth ground or needing guidance by perception in performing routine motions, for example, in grasping and manipulating objects.

Already at this simple level a stringent criterion of correctness for rule following is in effect. The perceptual systems must manage systematically to deliver representations of the world that accord with a rule of correspondence to which the action systems are also adjusted. On the Wittgensteinian picture, one language user trains another, the evidence that each is conforming to a rule being that their results match. Similarly, that both the perceptual systems and the action systems are conforming to rules is evidenced by the fact that the results of their cooperative activities on varying occasions are constant. The bees get to nectar, the body remains upright, the path on the ground is negotiated and the coffee cup safely transported to the mouth. Moreover, consistent conformity to rules at this level is a very considerable achievement. The perceptual systems must locate the layout of distal circumstances through a wide variety of mediating conditions such as frequently changing lighting conditions, visual static, occluding objects, changes in position of the body and eyes and so forth. They must recognize the same individual or the same kind or the same stuff again, so as to represent it consistently, from numerous angles, perhaps as in numerous postures, manifesting itself in a variety of ways through different sensory modalities (Millikan 2000; 2004: part IV). To make perceptual maps for action that map consistently, recognizing relevant perceptual constancies, showing forms and objects by rule in a consistent way, is a task of enormous complexity.

Beyond perception for action, humans, at least, make cognitive maps that are not dedicated in advance to the guidance of particular behaviors. We collect great quantities of information with no immediate uses in view, storing it away perhaps for later contingencies. Having separated the descriptive from the directive aspects of representation, these have to be joined together again through practical inference. But representations of fact that are not immediately tested in action and that are then used to form more representations and then still more through inference, need to be screened for accuracy and consistency in some way. Rules or patterns of belief formation need to be strictly regimented as they are developed, well in advance of practical uses for the resulting beliefs. Wittgenstein proposed that this screening is accomplished by the criterion of agreement in judgments with others. I have proposed that it is done in primary instances by the criterion of agreement with one's self in judgments. Agreeing judgments need not be made by different persons. Judgments can be made by the same person in different ways, from different perspectives, under changing conditions, using different sensory modalities, employing different inferential patterns (Millikan 1984: ch. 18–19; 2000: ch. 7; 2004: ch. 19). Agreement with oneself in judgment attests to the fact that one is managing to map again the very same objective structures in the world through different methods of projection. Indeed, agreement with others is discovered only as a form of agreement with oneself. Agreeing with others is not speaking in unison. If you and I say in unison, "That cookie is mine" we are disagreeing. To recognize agreement with another in judgment, you have to advance for yourself rules of translation by which another's speech carries information to you, these rules being entirely parallel to the patterns or rules in accordance with which you translate sensory information arriving through a great variety of other media into beliefs (Millikan 2000: ch. 6; 2004: ch. 9).

This being said, none the less there remains something very special about agreement with others in judgments. We acquire the vast majority of our concepts through the medium of public language, just as we acquire the vast majority of our practical and social skills from others. But far more important, the larger proportion of our concepts could not in principle have been developed solo because the multiple perspectives and sources of information required to test their objectivity are made possible only through cooperation with others who have independent access to the same objective affairs through other temporal and spatial perspectives. To take just one instance, concepts of dated occurrences, indeed, all concepts involving historical time, would seem to be possible only with the help of others informed of these occurrences independently from other perspectives (Millikan 2004: ch. 19).

That is quite enough said about discord between the son and the daughter. Let me end by noting a very deep theme that is common to Brandom's work and mine, binding us together and setting us apart from others currently writing about language and thought.

Brandom and I are both committed to explaining the meanings of linguistic expressions in terms of their use (though there are, of course, differences in how we understand "use"). Brandom puts this by saying that "semantics must answer to pragmatics" (Brandom 1994: 83), arguing against "representationalism" — the view that representation comes first, then inference, then use. A representation is something that purports to represent, and purporting to represent is purporting to represent to some interpreter, some user who is "taking, treating, or using a representation as a representing …" (p. 75). McDowell (1997: 158) puts the position this way: "We cannot work up from the semantics of words to the semantics of sentences, and only then move up to consider the structure of the language game".

I have taken exactly the same position, though the terminology is different. In the case of language, what Brandom calls the study of "pragmatics" corresponds roughly to what I call the study of "function". "Meaning", in the most basic sense, simply *is* function; it is what I have called "proper" or "stabilizing" function (Millikan 1984: ch. 1–6; 2004: ch. 2 and 11) or, very roughly, what Sellars called "survival value". The functions of complete linguistic forms are to perform complete speech acts, these being cooperative acts accomplished by speaker and hearer together. The performance of cooperative acts is what keeps speakers using these forms in consistent ways and keeps hearers responding to them in consistent ways, hence keeps them in circulation. I have tended to reserve the term "pragmatics" for the study only of how non-conventional speech acts are performed, acts which do not express conventional functions because not directly derived from precedent, but this is a mere terminological difference. The "semantic" dimension of representation, if we understand by this the involvement of truth or satisfaction conditions, is owed to a certain *way* of performing a function, a certain kind of mechanism that is employed. Satisfaction conditions are related to function as a method or manner is to a performance.

In the case of thought, I have argued, there is no intentionality prior to the emergence of complete representations having truth or satisfaction conditions, and representations cannot have satisfaction conditions unless they have uses. Briefly put, there is no such thing as intentionality without attitude. Participating in inference processes by which new descriptive and directive representations are formed is a central way in which human intentional attitudes are employed, so the intentionality of these attitudes and their content is a function, in part, of inferential patterns. That these patterns have to match their content and that their content

depends in part on these patterns are two sides of a coin. On the other hand, I have claimed, there is also plenty of intentionality prior to that of the intentional attitudes, both in the perceptions of animals and humans and in simpler messenger systems that abound in the body.

Note

1. The sketch given below is developed in Millikan (1984, 1993 and 2004), coupled with the epistemology of theoretical concepts developed (most fully) in Millikan (2000).

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A deflationist theory of intentionality?

Brandom's analysis of *de re* specifying attitude-ascriptions*

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The paper presents an interpretation of Brandom's analysis of *de re* specifying attitude-ascriptions. According to this interpretation, his analysis amounts to a deflationist reading of intentionality. In the first section I sketch the specific role deflationist theories of truth play within the philosophical debate on truth. Then I describe some analogies between the contemporary constellation of reading truth theories and the current confrontation of controversial theories of intentionality. The second section gives a short summary of Brandom's analysis of attitude-ascription, focusing on his account of the grammar of *de re* ascriptions of belief. The third section discusses in detail those aspects of his account from which a deflationist conception of intentionality may be derived, or which at least permit such a reading. In the proposed interpretation of Brandom's analysis, the vocabulary expressing the representational directedness of thought and talk does not describe a genuine *property* of mental states, but has an *alternative descriptive* function and in addition contains a *performative* and a *metadescriptive* element.

Keywords: Aboutness, deflationism, de re attitude-ascription, intentionality, mental representation, mental states, performative element of sense, substitutional commitment.

1. Introduction

An essential theoretical principle of Robert B. Brandom's (1994) pragmatic explanation of language and intentionality is the assumption that some of the commitments undertaken by a speaker outreach the commitments acknowledged by the speaker himself. This is the case because some undertaken commitments are inferential *consequences* of the explicitly acknowledged commitments — conse-

quences that the speaker may not be conscious of. The account of the *representational dimension* of propositional content worked out in Chapter 8 of *Making it Explicit* refers to this structural transcendence of commitments. According to this account, ascriptions of propositional attitudes that make explicit this representational dimension express certain consequences of linguistically acknowledged commitments. These consequences are assumed to eventually transcend the doxastic horizon of the speaker. Brandom claims the capacity of the interpreter to ascribe such transcending contents of commitments to be a necessary precondition of any intersubjective linguistic understanding that extracts substantial information from the utterances of a speaker.

The following reflections apply this procedure of extracting information by means of interpretation to Brandom's own analysis of the ascription of propositional attitudes. The intention is to make explicit a specific commitment that is *undertaken* by Brandom as a consequence of his explanation, but not *explicitly* acknowledged. The reason for this undertaking is that the consequence in question seems to be an idea that opens up an unusual, but theoretically promising, perspective on the phenomenon of intentionality. This idea consists in that intentionality is not a *property* of mental states, at least not in any common use of the word. I intend to give reasons for the thesis that Brandom, as a consequence of his explanation, undertakes a commitment to a *deflationist theory of intentionality*. This implicit commitment obviously contains a withdrawal from conventional explanatory strategies. So far, at least within mainstream philosophical debates on intentionality, a position of this kind has not played any important role.

The systematic status of a possible deflationist conception of intentionality will be examined in the first section by comparison with the analogous role of deflationist truth theories. A summary of Brandom's analysis of attitude-ascription follows, which leads to the discussion in the third section. There, I will give a more detailed account of those aspects of Brandom's analysis, from which the deflationist conception in question can be derived, or which at least allow for such an interpretation.

To begin with a short remark on terminology: I will use the technical expression "attitude-ascription" to refer to the ascription of propositional attitudes. Accordingly, the expression "attitude predicate" shall designate a predicate expression used to ascribe a propositonal attitude.

2. Theories of truth and theories of intentionality

Deflationist theories of truth are a reaction to the problem that it does not seem possible to give any satisfactory explanation of the supposed property of sentences and beliefs the predicate "true" stands for. On the one hand, explanatory theories of truth, such as the correspondence theory, the coherence theory, the evidence theory and the consensus theory, are confronted with the objection that they either operate with metaphysical assumptions or specify criteria of truth that do not match our ordinary conceptual intuitions. On the other hand, the alternative of regarding truth as an indefinable basic phenomenon of the linguistic and mental universe not open to any further explanation does not seem very attractive.

A radically different approach, which abandons the premise that truth is a real *property* with a nature that can be an object of further philosophical analysis, promises dissolution of this theoretical dilemma. This kind of *deflationist* conception may bear the form of a *redundance theory* of truth as well as of a *performative*, *disquotational* or *prosentential* analysis of the truth predicate. Its basic idea is that we do not use the predicate "true" to ascribe a property to sentences or beliefs.[1]

Interestingly, the current landscape of intentionality theories seems to fit a synoptic description similar to that of the approaches in the field of truth theories before the appearance of deflationist positions. The shared premise in all cases is the assumption, based on F. Brentano, that intentionality is a specific feature of propositional attitudes, namely their property of being representationally *directed* to an object or being *about* an object. While the competing reductionist explanatory strategies of authors such as R. Millikan, F. Dretske and J. Fodor try to describe the representational reference of beliefs and intentions by sketching a functionalist (and causal) picture of mental representation,[2] antireductionists like J. Searle (1983: 26) characterize intentionality as an irreducible ground level property of the mind. Both approaches, though, share the assumption that representational directedness, which is sometimes technically referred to as "aboutness", is a genuine property of propositional attitudes and must either be analyzable into more basic concepts or itself be an elementary property.

Whoever believes that the reductionist explanatory strategies mentioned above miss the actual meaning of a "representational" relation rather than clarify this kind of relation, and whoever considers the readiness to add intentionality to the class of ontologically irreducible basic phenomena to be a form of theoretical resignation, may perhaps regard the controversy between these two strategies to be a dilemma of the same kind as the dilemma in the area of truth theories outlined before. A radical switch of view, which abandons the habitual assumption that intentionality is a genuine *property*, may then seem to be a solution as promising

as the deflationist turn in the theory of truth. Yet, as far as I know, a comparable conception of intentionality has not been worked out in detail up to now.

In the following sections, I intend to show that the analysis of the representational aboutness of propositional attitudes presented in Chapter 8 of *Making it Explicit* can be interpreted as a kind of deflationist theory of intentionality. However, if this is accurate, the deflationist turn remains hidden under the surface of Brandom's explicit characterization of his position.[3]

3. Brandom's reconstruction of the grammar of *de re* specifying attitude-ascriptions

Brandom's analysis of the intentionality of mental states is structured in two steps. The first step is the claim that the philosophical concept of the representational *directedness* of beliefs or intentions has its ordinary language basis in ascriptions of propositional attitudes that specify the content of the attitude ascribed in the *de re* style. As a second step, a detailed reconstruction of what is expressed by such ascriptions is provided.

Concerning the first step, Brandom considers *de re* specifying attitude-ascriptions like "Mary believes of Kasimir that he is a thief" to be the very way of speaking in which the philosophical assumption that beliefs and intentions are *about* — and in this sense representationally *directed to* — objects has its grammatical origin. This directedness is what is expressed by the use of the word "of" in such ascriptions. Thus, these locutions are "idioms we typically use to express the intentional directedness of thought and talk — the fact that we think and talk about things and states of affairs" (pp. 499f.).[4] Consequently, a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of mental and linguistic representation can only be gained by accurately analyzing the meaning of these colloquial locutions.

Based on this consideration, Brandom reconstructs the meaning of *de re* specifying attitude-ascriptions concentrating on the example of ascriptions of simple beliefs. Their propositional contents have the form "a is F", where "a" stands for an object and "F", for a property. He bases his reconstruction upon the premise that *de dicto* and *de re* ascriptions do not refer to different kinds of belief, but are simply used to specify the content of the ascribed belief in different ways (p. 503). By transforming a *de dicto* ascription of the form "x believes that a is F" into a *de re* ascription of the form "x believes *of* b that it is F", the same belief state is characterized in a different manner, the latter characterization expressing the representational dimension of its propositional content. The potential transition from the *de*

dicto to the *de re* specification, i.e., the systematic availability of a double ascription mode, is thus an essential element of the general grammar of belief ascriptions.

Accordingly, Brandom's explication of the content of *de re* specifying belief ascriptions goes hand in hand with an analysis of the corresponding *de dicto* meaning of the ascriptions. This twofold explanation is based on three substantial theoretical premises introduced by Brandom in the preceding chapters of *Making it Explicit*. The first of them is the unusual conceptual approach of identifying a propositional attitude with a specific kind of *normative status*, i.e., a propositional contentful *commitment* a speaker is able to *undertake* by explicitly *acknowledging* it in performing a speech act. According to this conceptualization, beliefs are the subclass of so called *doxastic commitments* undertaken by assertional speech acts (pp. 157–159, 194). In order to emphasize this idea, Brandom sometimes uses a special technical expression instead of the ordinary language predicate "believes". In what follows, I will not adopt this expression but rather directly translate Brandom's depiction of its use into statements about the use of the predicate "believes".[5] Secondly, Brandom's explanation is founded on the premise that the propositional content of a commitment is constituted by the inferential relations the commitment is embedded in — relations which partially depend on further commitments functioning as concomitant beliefs (pp. 130ff., 477ff.). The third premise is the proposal to consider an identity judgment of the form $a = b$ to be a so-called *substitutional commitment*. This commitment legitimates the general intersubstitutability of the singular terms "a" and "b" and thereby endorses classes of corresponding inferential transitions between substitutional variants of complete sentences (pp. 367–376).[6]

The consequence of the general identification of beliefs with doxastic commitments is that, according to Brandom, both the *de dicto* and the *de re* predication of a belief are used to ascribe such a *commitment*. In both cases some expressions figuring as parts of the predicates are used to specify the propositional content of the ascribed commitment. Employing Davidson's paratactical analysis, Brandom illustrates the underlying mechanism of content specification with the help of the example of belief ascriptions in the *de dicto* style. According to this analysis, the sentential expression following the operator "that" specifies the ascribed commitment by a relation of sameness: A predication of the form "x believes that p" ascribes to x an acknowledged doxastic commitment that has the same content as the specific commitment the ascriber would acknowledge by asserting the sentence p. The criterion for the ascription is x's disposition to affirm the commitment in question by performing a corresponding assertional speech act. Furthermore, the claim "x believes that p" implies the assumption that x could acknowledge the sentence "p" as an adequate expression of his own commitment (pp. 534–545).

The crucial difference between the grammar of *de dicto* belief predications and the grammar of corresponding *de re* predications consists in the fact that part of the meaning of a *de re* ascription is — in addition to the *attribution* of a *doxastic commitment* — the explicit *acknowledgment* of a further commitment by the ascriber, for the ascriber *explicitly* undertakes an additional *substitutional commitment*. For example, the transition from the *de dicto* predication

> Egon believes that the evening star is no planet

to the *de re* ascription

> Egon believes of Venus that it is no planet

essentially rests on the acknowledgement of a *substitutional commitment* corresponding to the identity judgment:

> The evening star = Venus

As Brandom stresses, this additional commitment is *undertaken* by the ascriber but not *ascribed* to the target person of the ascription, who may or may not acknowledge the commitment in question (p. 506). Moreover, one must emphasize that the exact content of the underlying *de dicto* ascription cannot be derived from the *de re* ascription mentioned in the example above, nor can any information about the second relatum of the substitutional commitment acknowledged by the ascriber be extracted. It only contains the claim that Egon believes a certain object to be no planet and the claim that this object, specified in some manner, is identical with Venus.

In order to understand in what way a *de re* ascription, too, entails a specification of the propositional content of the ascribed doxastic commitment, it is necessary to focus on the second of Brandom's three theoretical premises described above. According to this premise, the propositional content of a commitment is determined by its *inferential role* in the context of further commitments. A *de re* ascription specifies this inferentially articulated content by making explicit the inferential potential of the *ascribed* doxastic commitment in the context of the substitutional commitment *undertaken* by the ascriber. The statement "a believes *of* b that it is F" can be understood as articulating an inferential consequence which can — in the light of a commitment to the claim *undertaken* by the ascriber that a = b — be drawn from a commitment *ascribed de dicto* as "x believes that a is F". As this substitutional commitment need not be shared by the ascription's target person, the content specification in the *de re* style expresses an implication of the ascribed commitment that may transcend the horizon of that person.[7] Nevertheless, this consequence is a commitment the person in question has *undertaken,* too. By articulating horizon-transcending implications of an ascribed doxastic

commitment *mediated* by judgements of the ascriber, *de re* ascriptions are an essential element of a form of understanding that extracts substantial information from the viewpoint of another person by connecting it with one's own additional assumptions (513–517).[8]

The fact that the substitutional commitment undertaken in the case of a *de re* ascription may not be shared by the target person of the ascription has the consequence that the expressions figuring within a *de re* predication do not determine the content of the ascribed doxastic commitment in the same way as the expressions used in the case of a *de dicto* ascription do. While in the latter case all the content specifying expressions are possible elements of an assertional speech act, by which the ascriber could acknowledge the same commitment the target person acknowledges according to the ascription, the producer of a *de re* ascription takes the singular term exported into the scope of the "of" operator to be a legitimate *substitute* for *another* singular term — a term that, in connection with the predicate remaining within the scope of the "that" operator, would form an assertional sentence through which the ascriber would be able to acknowledge the same commitment as the other person does according to the ascription (pp. 542–546).

4. Deflationist elements in Brandom's analysis

The foregoing description of Brandom's position provides sufficient material to see to what extent Brandom undertakes a commitment to a deflationist theory of intentionality by his analysis of the meaning of *de re* ascriptions.

As we have seen, the general principle shared by deflationist theories of truth is that the predicate "true" is not used to ascribe any real property that could be subject to further philosophical investigation. The idea of truth as a supposed property of sentences or propositions has its origin, therefore, in a misinterpretation of ascriptions of the form "p is true". Now, a deflationist theory of representational directedness could be based on an analogous diagnosis, if the locutions seeming to support the idea of representational directedness as a genuine property of beliefs and intentions could be proved to have no use as expressions of such a property of propositional attitudes.

The specific aspect of Brandom's analysis that offers a starting point for the justification of this idea is that *de re* ascriptions of the form "x believes *of* a that it is F" are the very locutions that originally articulate the representational directedness of propositional contentful states — assuming the aboutness of mental states is exactly what those locutions make explicit, in contrast to corresponding *de dicto* ascriptions of the form "x believes that a is F". Based on this principle,

anyone conceiving of directedness as a genuine property of propositional attitudes is committed to an interpretation of the difference in meaning between *de dicto* and *de re* ascriptions, according to which the expression "*of* x", when figuring within *de re* belief ascriptions, somehow contributes to the articulation of a *descriptive feature* of the ascribed belief that is not articulated by a corresponding *de dicto* ascription.[9]

Assuming that representational directedness is exactly what *de re* ascriptions make explicit in contrast to *de dicto* ascriptions, the second consequence is the complementary principle that any analysis of the meaning of these forms of ascriptions that does not trace their difference in meaning back to the additional expression of a descriptive feature undermines the idea of intentionality as a *property* of propositional attitudes. It thus implies a deflationist conception of intentionality. As we will see, Brandom's account of the functioning of the different forms of attitude-ascription seems to fulfil exactly this condition.

4.1 A performative meaning aspect of *de re* ascriptions?

One of the most radical ways to fight the idea that the difference in meaning between attitude-ascriptions in the *de dicto* and the *de re* style is derived from the additional expression of a descriptive feature of the attitudes ascribed, is to deny that this difference in meaning is *identical* with a difference of *descriptive content*. A position of this kind, regarding *de re* ascriptions as being endowed with an additional *non-descriptive* sense element, can be associated with some of Brandom's formulations that invite a reading according to which the explicitating sense of these ascriptions contains a *performative* element of meaning. Consider, for example, the following passage:

> *De re* ascriptions are the *explicit expression* [my emphasis] of perspectivally hybrid deontic attitudes, the attribution by the ascriber of one discursive commitment (doxastic or practical, and so propositionally contentful) and the *undertaking* [my emphasis] by that ascriber of another (substitutional) commitment (p. 586).

As indicated by this explanation, a *de re* ascription does not only express a substitutional commitment *undertaken* by the ascriber, but also expresses the *undertaking* of this additional commitment. This claim, repeated elsewhere (p. 544), is exactly the part of Brandom's account that seems to lead to a meaning analysis which associates a specific *performative* sense element with *de re* ascriptions, at least if one takes the *undertaking* of a commitment by a linguistic utterance to be something a speaker *does* by using words. For whenever a linguistic expression is used not only

to *perform* a specific linguistic act but also to *make explicit* that the act in question is being performed, it can be said to have a *performative* meaning.

A well known example for this kind of performative use is the illocutionary operator "I claim (or assert) that…". The *act* of claiming is linguistically made explicit by this formulation, although it can also be performed without concomitant explicitation. The important point is that the performative phrase *expresses* an *act* as being an element of linguistic practice rather than *describing* a state of affairs. A reconstruction of an analogous pragmatic function is possible in the case of expressions that are predicates from the point of view of their surface grammar, and therefore seem to be used to ascribe properties. For example, according to a performative analysis of the truth predicate, the function of sentences of the form "p is true" does not consist in attributing the property "truth" to an assertion or proposition. The expression "… is true" is used to linguistically make explicit the act of *endorsing* a claim, namely *acknowledging one's own commitment* to a claim — an act which is already performed by the simple assertive use of "p". Brandom himself integrates such an anti-descriptivist and performative understanding of the truth predicate into his own rather complex analysis of the use of "true", which also entails a prosentential approach. He writes:

> … undertaking a commitment is adopting a certain *normative stance* with respect to a claim; it is not attributing a property to it. The classical metaphysics of truth properties misconstrues what one is doing in endorsing the claim as *describing* it in a special way. (…) Properly understanding truth talk in fact requires understanding just this difference in social perspective: between *attributing* a normative status to another and *undertaking* or adopting it oneself (p. 515).

Immediately after this, Brandom explains:

> This is just the distinction that underlies the use of *de re* ascriptions. As the regimented form considered here emphasizes, they mark overtly the distinction between the *doxastic* commitment that is *attributed* and the *substitutional* commitments that are *undertaken* by the attributor (ibid.).

Although in this explanation *de re* locutions are not, as in the preceding quote, directly characterized as making explicit the *undertaking* of a substitutional commitment, the explicit parallel to the use of the truth predicate suggests an understanding of their meaning according to which they are provided with the performative function of expressing a normative act of this kind.

Such a conception would imply that a statement of the form "x believes *of* a that it is F" explicitly marks the specific *normative act of undertaking* a substitutional commitment that is performed by using this very utterance. This *performative explicitating sense*, of course, would only be one part of the whole meaning.

As an attitude-ascription, a *de re* ascription would in addition *inter alia* have the *attributive sense* of the predication of a doxastic commitment. It would share this semantic element with a *de dicto* ascription; in this case it would be correct to speak of a performative *partial sense*.

The important and philosophically substantial aspect of the described view lies, however, in the fact that the performative element of meaning has no *descriptive* character. Just as the performative use of "true" does not have the descriptive meaning of the attribution of a property, words such as "of" or "about", which figure within *de re* specifying attitude-ascriptions, not only contribute to the *attribution of a commitment* or the *description of a state of affairs*, according to this view, but are also used to make a speaker's *normative attitude* explicit. This, indeed, would fulfil the criterion of a deflationist theory of intentionality specified earlier on. For if the representational directedness of propositional attitudes is taken to be exactly what attitude-predications in the *de re* style, in contrast to attitude-predications in *de dicto* style, make explicit, and if it is true that the difference in meaning between *de re* and *de dicto* ascriptions is not just a difference of descriptive content, but is rooted in an additional performative element of *de re* ascriptions, the conclusion must be drawn that the directedness in question cannot be a descriptive *feature* of the ascribed attitude.

It is worth noting how far-reaching and deeply subversive the diagnostic potential of a deflationist conception of this kind would be. The whole tradition of philosophical theory construction, seeking to explain intentionality as a supposed exceptional property of mental states as originally described by Brentano, would in fact be based on a systematic misinterpretation of the transition from statements of the form "x believes that a is F" to statements of the form "x believes of a that it is F", a misinterpretation according to which formulations of the second kind articulate a specific relational *property* of the ascribed belief — its being representationally *directed* to an object — and mark this supposed relation between the ascribed belief and its object by the word "of". What in fact would really happen when a *de dicto* ascription is switched into a *de re* ascription would be the integration of an additional performative element, which would enrich the descriptive content of the whole statement as little as the transition from "p" to "p is true" does according to a performative analysis of the truth predicate.[10]

4.2 The differing propositional contents of *de dicto* and *de re* ascriptions

As stressed before, the described interpretation of Brandom's analysis of attitude-ascriptions is only *one* possible way of reading the complex account presented in Chapter 8 of *Making it Explicit*. Surely, this reading owes its specific charm to the

description of a theoretical perspective, from which truth and intentionality — the two quasi-cousins in the family of semantic concepts — can be explained analogously.

Now, a reconstructive analysis diagnosing *de re* ascriptions as exhibiting a genuinely *performative* element of sense is just a very radical deflationist conception of representational directedness. According to the principle stated at the beginning of this section, in the context of Brandom's premises a metatheoretical characterization of this kind is true of any grammatical analysis of *de re* ascriptions that *does not identify* the difference in meaning between *de dicto* and *de re* ascriptions with *de re* ascriptions expressing an additional *property* of the ascribed propositional attitude. This criterion could, for example, be also fulfilled by an analysis that takes this difference in meaning to coincide completely with a difference of descriptive *content*, for not every such difference has to have its sources in the additional representation of a *property*. As we will see in what follows, this is obviously the way in which Brandom's account fulfils the criterion, independently of the performative reading discussed before.

It is important to stress that the assumption of a performative sense of *de re* specifying belief ascriptions does not exclude the possibility that an additional difference in meaning between *de dicto* and *de re* ascriptions might consist in a difference between the *propositional contents* associated with the assertional commitments undertaken in both cases. Brandom indeed seems to suppose a descriptive difference in meaning of this kind in his analysis. While the propositional content of a *de dicto* ascription is limited to the claim that a certain person acknowledges a specific doxastic commitment, in the case of a *de re* ascription the descriptive content of the *substitutional commitment* undertaken by the ascriber is added. This corresponds to an identity judgement stating an identity relation between two objects.

Even if Brandom's analysis is interpreted as *identifying* the difference in meaning of the two forms of ascription with the difference of their assertional contents, and not as assuming *de re* ascriptions to exhibit the additional *performative* function of making explicit the respective *act* of undertaking the substitutional commitment involved, this analysis seems to fulfil the criterion of a deflationist theory of intentionality. For, as the following formal reconstruction of the propositional contents in question will make clear, their difference evidently is not of such a kind that *de re* ascriptions express an additional *property* of the ascribed attitude.

The additional element of propositional content that a *de re* ascription contains due to the substitutional commitment undertaken by it obviously corresponds to the conjunctive element "y = a" on the right hand of the following biconditional definition of the meaning of a *de re* ascription:

S believes of a that it is F ↔ [(S believes that y is F) ∧ (y = a)]

By using the variable y, the second link of the defining conjunction represents the fact mentioned above: A *de re* ascription does not completely determine the content of the substitutional commitment undertaken by the ascriber by only specifying one of the two relata of the claimed identity relation. Similarly, the underlying *de dicto* specification of the ascribed doxastic commitment remains partly undetermined, a fact that is symbolized by the appearance of the same variable within the first component of the defining conjunction. The propositional contents of *de dicto* and *de re* style belief ascriptions, if made explicit in their logical structure, thus display the following schematic form:

De dicto: S believes that a is F
De re: (S believes that y is F) ∧ (y = a)

According to this reconstruction, on the one hand the difference of the respective contents amounts to an additional claim made in the *de re* case about an identity relation between a specified and an unspecified object. On the other hand, the variable makes clear that in this case *less* information is given about the ascribed doxastic commtiment itself, rather than articulating an additional feature of this commitment.

However, in the biconditional formulated above the use of the individual variable y can be avoided by using an infinite set of conditions specified by the use of individual constants:

S believes of a that it is F ↔ {[(S believes that b is F) ∧ (b = a)] ∨ [(S believes that c is F) ∧ (c = a)] ∨ [(S believes that d is F) ∧ (d = a)] ∨… }

Yet even from this alternative version of the biconditional one cannot infer that a *de re* ascription — as opposed to a *de dicto* ascription — refers to a belief somehow characterized by an additional *property*.

Independently of the indeterminacy expressed by the use of the variable, the formal scheme demonstrates that the additional condition, which a belief ascribed in the *de dicto* style must fulfil in order for a *de re* ascription to be true of it, is the existence of an identity relation of two objects. What matters in the present context is the fact that such an identity relation between things is something completely different from a *feature* exhibited by the state of belief in question.

Thus, even under the premise that the meaning element of a *de re* ascription exceeding the meaning of a *de dicto* ascription completely originates in a difference of propositional content, Brandom's analysis contradicts the assumption that this transcending element of sense is generated by the additional representation of a property of the ascribed attitude. Under the further premise that the concept of

the representational directedness of a propositional attitude designates in an abstractly nominalizing form exactly what *de re* ascriptions make explicit in contrast to *de dicto* ascriptions, the deflationist consequence can again be drawn that the directedness in question is no genuine *property* of propositional attitudes.

4.3 The metadescriptive function of the operator "of"

Brandom's specific account for the function of the operator "of" within *de re* specifying attitude-predicates of the form "x believes *of* a that it is F" contains a further deflationist element. For independently from the hitherto discussed aspects of Brandom's analysis, this account undermines the assumption that the expression contributes to the descriptive characterization of the ascribed belief by standing for a specific *relation* between the belief state and an object. This leads to a further subversive effect. For the intuition that the word "of" (as well as "about") signifies a relation of this kind is an essential source of the idea that beliefs and intentions possess the relational property of being representationally directed to an object. This intuition is expressed in the terminological practice of naming the property in question "aboutness" or "of-ness".

The fact that Brandom's analysis already subverts the starting premise of such theoretical constructions becomes obvious from the following general description of the explicitating sense of *de re* ascriptions:

> Representational locutions [i. e. *de re* ascriptions of propositional attitudes, S. K.] make explicit the sorting of commitments into those attributed and those undertaken … (p. 519).

We can understand the role of the operator "of" in *de re* ascriptions in the light of this claim as contributing to the described *sorting function.* The "of" marks the fact that within a complex predicate, which is as a whole used to *attribute* a commitment, some expressions make explicit an additional commitment *undertaken* by the ascriber. This is true of exactly those words that lie within the grammatical scope of the "of". As we have seen before, these words play their specific role in the characterization of the propositional content of the ascribed commitment by being, from the point of view of the ascriber, legitimate *substitutes* for expressions which could be elements of a sentence acknowledged by the target person of the ascription as an adequate expression of her own commitment. In contrast, those expressions figuring within the scope of the "that" operator fulfil their content specifying function by being *themselves* elements of a sentential expression that could be acknowledged by the target person as an adequate expression of her own commitment. To put it more generally, Brandom's account shows that the two expressions "of" and "that" together take over the coordinated *sorting* function to

determine the *different ways* in which their *succeeding* expressions fulfil their content specifying function.

Now, provided that the word "of" — like the word "that" — determines a certain way in which *other* words fulfil their content specifying and hence descriptive function within the ascription of a doxastic commitment, this word itself has *no* descriptive sense. Its role is better characterized as a "meta-descriptive" one. If, however, this is true, then it is obviously wrong to assume that the word "of" contributes in an immediate way to the descriptive characterization of an ascribed belief by making explicit a specific relational property of the belief, a property which could accordingly be called "of-ness" or "aboutness".

The pointlessness of a conceptual hypostatization of a property assumed to be expressed by the word "of" within *de re* ascriptions and named "aboutness" becomes very obvious when one considers the analogous form of the meaning analysis of the two operators "of" and "that". According to the analysis, the word "of" has the same *kind* of function as the word "that". However, nobody would be inclined to assume that *de dicto* ascriptions using the "that" operator likewise express a specific property of the ascribed propositional attitude, which could correspondingly be called the "thatness" of the attitude.[11]

5. Conclusion

Brandom's analysis of the grammar of *de re* specifying attitude-ascriptions thus seems to imply a deflationist theory of representational directedness in more than one respect, if this directedness is conceived to be exactly what *de re* ascriptions of propositional attitudes make explicit in contrast to the corresponding *de dicto* ascriptions. Firstly, Brandom's reconstruction of the function of the operator "of" contradicts the assumption that this expression designates a specific *relation* between a mental state and an object. Furthermore, the assertional content imputed to a *de re* ascription by the analysis does not represent any additional *property* of the attitude ascribed. Finally, some of Brandom's formulations invite a reading, according to which the difference in meaning between *de dicto* and *de re* ascriptions consists not only in a difference of *descriptive* content, but also originates in an additional *performative* sense element of *de re* ascriptions.

If this is correct, Brandom's analysis leads to a deflationist theory of intentionality. Brandom himself does not characterize his account this way.[12] The commitment to this kind of deflationism obviously is one of the commitments Brandom implicitly undertakes by explicitly avowing other theoretical commitments. Nevertheless, the result is a conception that in its systematic consequences seems to

be able to contribute to a completely revised understanding of the phenomenon of intentionality. If one assumes that in the area of truth theory the crucial theoretical breakthrough was not achieved until the rise of deflationist conceptions, one might take the new point of view described here to be a promising change of theoretical perspective, which suggests new prospects in settling the problem of the "directedness" of intentional states bequeathed to the philosophy of our days by Brentano.[13]

How good the prospects really are depends on an answer to the question to what extent Brandom's analysis can be taken to be systematically convincing. This crucial question has not been addressed here. An assessment of this kind would have to include a critical evaluation of the systematic adequacy of the nontrivial theoretical presuppositions the analysis is based on. This could only be done sensibly in the context of a comprehensive discussion of all the constructive conceptual elements of Brandom's complex theory and therefore would surpass the framework of this paper.[14] My more modest ambition here was to make explicit a specific implicit consequence of Brandom's account and, through the description of a commitment undertaken by Brandom transcending the theoretical commitments explicitly acknowledged by him, maybe to attain an understanding that is suitable to extract, as Brandom would put it, some *substantial information* from the subject.

Notes

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1. For a detailed survey of deflationist theories of truth see Kirkham (1992: ch.10).

2. A critical survey of the naturalist explanatory approaches of these authors is provided by Schumacher (1997).

3. This meta-theoretical self-characterization first and foremost emphasizes the specific *inferentialist* approach to the phenomenon of linguistic and mental representation.

4. All page references in brackets refer to Brandom (1994).

5. This is a simplification, for Brandom seems to use the technical expression ("claims, that" which functions as an abbreviation of "is committed to the claim, that") because he doesn't identify the ordinary concept of belief with the concept of a doxastic commitment in every respect. However, the conceptual differences in question are not relevant in the context of this paper.

6. For some extensive commentaries on those three, strongly theory laden, premises, see Knell (2000 and 2004: ch. I-III and VII, 3).

7. For an extensive discussion of this point and an alternative reading of Brandom's analysis of de re ascriptions see Knell (2004: ch. III, 2).

8. In a certain sense this part of Brandom's analysis leads to a precise reconstruction of the old hemeneutic picture of understanding as a form of intersubjective "Horizontverschmelzung" (merging of horizons). Brandom's surprising point is, firstly, that he conceives of this "Horizontverschmelzung" as an *inferential* constellation, and secondly, that he uses this idea to explain the meaning of *representational* locutions.

9. While the classical understanding considers the truth predicate to be used to *directly* ascribe the property of truth, *de re* ascriptions — according to this interpretation — do not *ascribe* the property of representational directedness, since they rather ascribe an *attitude* to a person. Nevertheless they would be taken to express the directedness as an additional descriptive feature of the ascribed attitude — like the predicate "owns a fast car" *expresses* the descriptive property of being fast without directly *ascribing* it (what it ascribes is rather the *ownership* of a fast car).

10. As mentioned before, in contrast to the case of the analysis of "true", this deflationist explanation doesn't concern the *whole* meaning of the predication in question, but only a specific element of content that differs from the content of corresponding *de dicto* ascription.

11. Within the broad landscape of contemporary theories of intentionality, however, one finds theoretical constructions that suggest this, e.g., the idea that propositional attitudes are *directed* to a *content* (see Guttenplan 1994: 20). This supposed directedness to a content might be derived from the assumption that the operator "that" in "x believes that p" stands for a relation between the belief state and a propositional content p just as the idea of the relational directedness to an object is motivated by a descriptive reading of the expression "of " in *de re* ascriptions.

12. In contrast, the analysis of the *reference function* of singular terms presented in Chapter 5 of *Making it Explicit* — a function that according to Brandom is systematically related to the "aboutness" of propositional attitudes — is explicitly characterized as a deflationist analysis.

13. To prevent a possible misunderstanding, it must be emphasized that a deflationist theory of intentionality such as I have presented in connection with Brandom's explanations indeed does deflate the supposed *property of propositional attitudes* of being representationally directed to an object, but it does not deflate the *property of a person* of having propositional attitudes such as beliefs or intentions. Since beliefs and intentions are usually characterized as *intentional states* because of their supposed property of exhibiting intentionality, however, the property of having beliefs or intentions is in a secondary manner of speaking often called "intentionality" too. A deflationist theory of intentionality in this second sense of the word, which would deny that being in a belief state is a genuine property, must be clearly distinguished from the position discussed in this paper. On the other hand, the systematic relationship between the two uses of the expression "intentionality" raises interesting questions. For example, what consequences deflating intentionality qua representational *directedness* has for a theory of intentionality in the second sense, given that the concept of an intentional state is by *definition* understood as referring to a state possessing the supposed *property*.

14. For such a more general critical assessment see Knell (2004: ch. 1–3).

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Transcendental deduction of predicative structure in Kant and Brandom

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On the Fregean account of predication, which Brandom and Quine share, the predicative structure of a judgment consists in a certain deductive order of a suitable domain of judgments. A rival and, as will be argued, superior account of predication can be found in Kant, according to which the source of the predicative structure of thought is not an inferential order among thoughts, but thought's relation to intuition. Not only do intuitions provide thought with content but the dependence of thought on intuition is the principle of its form. The development of this systematic claim requires, or yields, a new reading of the Analogies of Experience.

Keywords: Apprehension, deductive order, Fregean object, intuition, observation categoricals, predication, substance, time.

1. Two Accounts of the source of predicative structure

I wish to discuss Kant's and Brandom's accounts of the source of the logical form of thought. Their accounts spring from and thus manifest their respective conceptions of the nature of thought. Kant writes on the first page of the *Critique of Pure Reason*: "All thought must, be it directly or indirectly, refer to intuition, and thus, in our case, to sensibility, for in no other way can an object be given to us" (Kant 1787: 49, A 19/B 23).[1]

Kant asserts that thought depends on intuition. We must receive the object about which we think, if we are to think something as opposed to nothing. Brandom (1994: xiv) writes in the preface of *Making it Explicit*: "It is argued […] that propositional contentfulness should be understood in terms of inferential articulation; propositions are what can serve as premises and conclusions of inferences".

Brandom asserts that the content of utterances and attitudes, in virtue of which utterances are speech acts and attitudes thoughts, consists in an inferential order

among these contents.[2] We think something as opposed to nothing if only our thought bears a certain inferential articulation. Kant maintains that thought essentially refers to sensory intuition, while Brandom puts forth the contrary claim that inferential articulation alone constitutes thought as thought. This leads to opposing accounts of the source of the forms of thought or judgment. I will restrict my attention to one fundamental form: predication.

Kant and Brandom both claim to give a transcendental deduction of the predicative structure of thought. Brandom writes:

> It turns out that there is a surprising connection between being a rational creature — in the sense that includes the possibility of using the expressive resources of specifically *logical* vocabulary to reflect one's conceptual content-conferring linguistic practices — on the one hand, and the structure of the *facts* that make up the world one can become aware of by applying those concepts, on the other. Rational beings live in a world of propertied and related particulars. Chapter 6 presents an expressive deduction of the necessity of this structure (Brandom 1994: xxi–xxii).

And Kant writes:

> The function of the categorical judgment is that of the relation of subject to predicate, for example, all bodies are divisible. However, as regards the merely logical employment of the understanding, it remains undetermined to which of the two concepts the function of the subject, and to which the function of the predicate, is to be assigned. For we can also say, something divisible is a body. But through the category of substance, when I bring the concept of body under it, it is determined: that its empirical intuition in experience must always be considered as subject and never as mere predicate (Kant 1787: 106, B 128).[3]

A deduction of a form of thought demonstrates that it is necessary in the sense that it springs from the nature of thought or reason. Brandom and Kant want to show that it is not an accident that we think and speak of objects and their determinations; both want to deduce this form of thought. But they think different characteristics are the source of its predicative structure. Brandom invokes our capacity to think about our own thinking, and this means in the context of his doctrine: about the inferential order of the linguistic practices that constitute thinking; predicative structure is necessary because *only this form of thought is compatible with semantic self-consciousness*. Kant, by contrast, attends to the relation of thought to sensory intuition and claims that we distinguish subject and predicate insofar as we think about what is given in experience; predicative structure is necessary because *only through this form does thought refer to intuition*. On Brandom's account, self-consciously articulated thought necessarily bears a predicative structure; on Kant's account, thought that relates to intuition necessarily distinguishes subject and

predicate. Kant maintains that it is in the nature of thought to refer to intuition. And here, in the intellect's relation to intuition, he finds the source of its forms. Brandom holds that thinking means participating in an inferentially articulated practice. And in this inferential order — more precisely in the conditions of its explicit reflection — he finds the source of the predicative structure of thought.

Kant and Brandom do not hold merely different views on the source of predication; they reject each other's view. Brandom explains that a sentence has specifically empirical content if a reliable differential responsive disposition links it to certain non-linguistic conditions in such a way that a speaker asserts the sentence when and only when these conditions obtain. If this is what it means for thought to express what is given to the senses, then the articulation of thought does not spring from its relation to intuition; for responsive dispositions impose no structure on sentences that are their objects. A sentence is the object of such a disposition *as a whole* or, in Quine's happy phrase, holophrastically. Kant, on his side, asserts that the distinction of subject and predicate is not to be found in the "merely logical employment of the understanding". Now, the "logical employment of the understanding" is its employment as described by general logic as opposed to transcendental logic: "General logic […] abstracts from all content of cognition, i.e., from all reference of cognition to the object, and considers only the logical form in the relation of cognitions among themselves" (Kant 1787: 77, A 55/B 79).[4]

The "relations of cognitions among themselves" of which Kant speaks are primarily inferential relations of judgments.[5] So a merely logical employment of understanding is making inferences according to the laws studied and expounded by general logic.

Kant's thought that the forms of the intellect spring from its reference to intuition is not, I think, visible as an option in current analytic philosophy of logic. But we cannot appreciate the inferentialist account of logical form, which originates with Frege and receives its most developed expression in Brandom, if we do not understand the position it rejects. I will therefore sketch a history of what we can call, in Kant's words, the merely logical account of predication, which traces its development from Frege to Quine to Brandom. I will then expound Kant's alternative account, which finds the source of predicative structure in thought's dependence on intuition, and suggest that we, anachronistically yet revealingly, read it as an answer to a problem in Frege's doctrine. By confronting the inferentialist tradition, which Brandom brings to a certain close, with Kant's views on logical form I aim to shed light on the conceptions of thought they express: thought as inferential order and thought as depending on intuition.

2. Forms of judgment and formal concepts

First I need to introduce in a general manner the notion of a form of judgment and the correlative notion of a formal concept or category. A *form of judgment* is a way in which a judgment is articulated into elements, or, conversely, a way in which its elements are conjoined in a judgment. A judgment's form, then, is its unity. "Predication" refers to a certain form, a certain unity, of judgment. A *formal concept* or *category* describes an element of a judgment solely with regard to the manner in which it joins other elements in a judgment. That is, it characterizes an object solely in terms of the form of judgments in which it figures. From a system of forms of judgment thus flows a table of categories.[6]

Kant contrasts pure concepts with empirical concepts: empirical concepts derive from experience, pure concepts originate in the faculty of thought or judgment. Kant asserts that categories are pure. We can understand this as follows: In order to understand an empirical concept, one must, in the fundamental case, encounter and be affected by objects that fall under it. By contrast, in order to understand a formal concept, one only needs to think that which falls under it — join it to other things in one thought — in the manner that the concept describes. And if the relevant form is a form of thought as such, then this condition is satisfied if one thinks at all. Hence, if certain forms of thought define the nature of thought, then the corresponding categories have their origin in the understanding, namely in this sense: one need not have received certain intuitions in order to understand and be able to use these concepts; rather, a thinking subject, simply in virtue of being a subject of thought, is equipped with everything necessary for grasping these concepts. Understanding them does not require specific *sensory experience*, but *reflection* on what one does when one thinks and makes judgments.

We will find that, for Frege, the formal concepts of object and concept are pure; for Quine, there is a sense in which they are empirical, while Brandom seeks to regain their purity in a modified way. But all authors I am considering, including Quine, agree in rejecting an account of predicative structure and, hence, of the formal concepts that express it, on which this structure and these concepts directly derive from experience. On this view, intuition presents us with objects under determinations independently of the form of judgments that express our sensory experience, and we shape the form of our judgments to fit these intuitions. As Michael Dummett (1995: 19) puts it, this view appeals to "an apprehension of objects […] underlying, but anterior to […] a grasp of a thought about them", which he says is "a form of external realism too coarse to be entertained". I agree that the view cannot be entertained, but not because it is too coarse, but because it is meaningless. The concept of an object describes how that to which it applies

figures in thought: it figures in thoughts of a certain form. We say nothing when we attempt to speak of an object while abstracting from its being thought in a certain way. If the formal concepts of object and determination are not pure, but empirical, then this cannot mean that they refer to something immediately given in sensory intuition. It can only mean that they express a hypothesis or theory, which is corroborated by, but goes beyond, what is given to the senses. And this is Quine's view, which we will discuss in due course.

3. Frege's account of predication

In the preface to *Grundgesetze der Arithmetik*, Frege (1893: xv) writes:

> Any law that asserts what is can be understood as requiring that one thinks in accordance with it, and is in this sense a law of thought. This holds of the laws of geometry and physics no less than of the laws of logic. The latter are more deserving of the title "laws of thought" only if this is meant to say that they are the most general laws, which lay down how one ought to think wherever one thinks at all.[7]

The logical laws do not govern thought about a particular subject matter, but thought as thought. In this way, they reveal what thought is.[8] Now Frege's laws of logic are laws of deductive inference. Frege thinks the essence of thought is a certain deductive order.

If the nature of thought consists in a certain deductive order, then thought as such bears a predicative structure if and only if that order gives rise to this structure. And so it seems. In order to show how the laws of logic apply to a given thought, one must represent it as articulated in a certain way. The laws are the principle of a system of forms of thought, a system of ways in which thought is articulated, so that, thus articulated, it falls under the laws of logic. If thought as thought is under the laws of logic, then these forms define the nature of thought. The corresponding categories are, in the elementary case, the concept of a Fregean object and the concept of a Fregean (first order) concept. They represent what they apply to as something that figures in thoughts which fall under a certain deductive order. A description of this order *exhausts* the content of these categories. On Frege's account, then, *the articulation of thought into object and concept consists in its inferential articulation*. Frege finds the source of predicative structure in the merely logical employment of the understanding.

Here I must insert a terminological remark. I speak of *Fregean* object and concept as a reminder that these concepts are not the same as those ordinarily expressed by the words "object" and "concept" or "thing" and "determination". Our inquiry requires that we employ the qualification "Fregean", for the claim that

predicative thought refers to Fregean objects and concepts expresses an account of the source of predication: the inferentialist account just expounded. If we want to be able to reflect on this account, we must not build it into our terminology.

Frege's account of predication runs into a devastating problem. Frege rejects a distinction of domains of objects; he thinks that any domain is always already part of what therefore is not a domain of objects, but rather *the domain of the objects*. It is well known that this idea leads to the incoherence of his system. It is less well known that the idea follows from, and in this sense expresses, the claim that the deductive order the system represents is the origin of the predicative structure of thought. I can bring out the connection by contrasting Frege's view of logic with what Warren Goldfarb calls "our view of logic":

> Our view of logic carries with it the notion that logical truths are completely general, not in the sense of being the most general truths about the logical furniture, but rather in the sense of having no subject matter in particular, of talking of no entities in particular, and of being applicable no matter what things we wish to investigate. No fragment of Frege's or Russell's system has this sort of generality (Goldfarb 1979: 352).

On our view of logic, the predicate calculus is a schema that can be applied to any domain of objects. When so applied, it represents a deductive order of judgments about elements of the domain. The calculus is general in the sense that it does not limit the number of domains to which it can be applied. Call this the generality *of* the system. Within the calculus, quantified judgments are general in the sense that they state what holds of all objects or concepts. Call this generality *in* the system. Frege's system is not general in the sense of applying to any domain of objects. But this is not because it is in this sense particular: it does not apply only to a specific, or limited number of, domains. Rather, Frege rejects the notion of a generality *of* the system. On his view, specifying a domain can only be a matter of employing a Fregean concept. Logically, a restricted quantifier is an unrestricted quantifier completing a predicate. If we want to represent the logical form of "All *A*s __", we must write, "All, if they are *A*s, __". In the latter phrase, no concept gives meaning to the quantifier.

Frege maintains that the laws of logic hold of thought as thought; judgment as such falls under these laws. This means that there can be nothing which must be done to *bring* a judgment under the laws of logic. Logic must, as Wittgenstein (1921: 5.473.) put it, take care of itself. On "our view of logic", by contrast, logic does not take care of itself. We must specify a domain of objects before we bring judgments about these objects under the laws of the predicate calculus. It follows that the laws of the calculus do not explain the predicative structure of those judgments. If a specification of a domain precedes, and is a condition of, the application

of the calculus to judgments about its elements, then reference to the elements cannot consist in thinking in accordance with the laws represented by the calculus. We must presuppose the predicative structure of the judgments that interpret the calculus. Hence, "our view of logic" entails that the deductive order represented by the predicate calculus is not the source of the predicative articulation of thought. Conversely, Frege's account of predicative structure entails his rejection of "our view of logic".

4. Quine and Brandom

As I have said, I will take for granted that the notion of a domain of *the* Fregean objects is incoherent and, consequently, that it cannot be maintained that thought as thought exhibits the deductive order represented by Frege's concept-script. If we want to hold on to the idea that predicative structure is inferential structure — if we want to find its source in "the merely logical employment of the understanding" — we must concede that predicative structure is not a feature of thought as such. We must equally deny the implication of "our view of logic" that it is possible to specify a domain of quantification *before* the deductive order of the predicate calculus is erected; for otherwise, reference to elements of the domain would not be explained in terms of this order. Quine and Brandom devise an explanation of the origin of predicative structure, which builds on these insights. On their view, we do not specify a domain and then subsume judgments about its elements under the deductive structure of the predicate calculus. Rather, we unify a given realm of judgments by *imposing on it* the inferential structure represented by the calculus. We thereby impose predicative structure on those judgments, and thus implicitly specify a domain of quantification.

Let me recount Quine's (1992: ch. 1–2) myth of the emergence of predicative structure. We start with observation sentences, sentences that a reliable differential responsive disposition ties to certain stimuli: a speaker assents to the sentence when and only when she receives stimuli of a certain sort; she dissents from the sentence when and only when she receives stimuli of a certain other sort. We then conjoin observation sentences by the connective "whenever" to observation categoricals. An observation categorical expresses the speaker's association of the stimuli connected with the two observation sentences. An observation categorical no longer expresses what is given to the senses; acceptance or rejection of it does not depend on current stimuli. But it is corroborated by sensory experience, if, in the past, a stimulus that has caused assent to the one observation sentence often concurred with a stimulus that has caused assent to the other. Next we impose inferential

relations among observation categoricals. We can think of these relations as made explicit in conditionals; then imposing them takes the form of assenting to certain compound sentences. The inferential relations or the sentences that express them go beyond what is given to the senses; but they are again corroborated if they yield corroborated observation categoricals. In a fourth step, we impose a certain form on these inferential relations, the form represented by the predicate calculus. Again, this form exceeds the testimony of the senses. It is a large scale hypothesis, but it is corroborated if and to the extent that it licenses corroborated observation categoricals. In this way, the deductive order that constitutes the predicative structure of judgments caught up in it does not spring from the nature of thought; its validity rather consists in the fact that it yields observation categoricals corroborated by the sensory experience that observation sentences express.

In the interest of the topic of this paper, I paste over great differences when I now say that Brandom parts company with Quine in the interpretation of the fourth step. Brandom argues that the inferential form that constitutes predicative structure is not accidental in the sense of its validity being merely empirical. For it is distinguished by the fact that it alone allows for the explicit representation of inferential relations of articulated judgments. In the context of Brandom's doctrine, this means that it allows for semantic self-consciousness of articulated thought. If self-consciousness is an essential feature of rationality, this amounts to a demonstration of the rational necessity of predicative structure, or a rationalist deduction of predication.

I shall refrain from summarizing Brandom's "expressive deduction" of the necessity of predication. But I must note a feature of it, in the light of which the presentation of its achievements quoted above appears a bit of an exaggeration. For Brandom demonstrates only a conditional: *if thought is articulated*, then it can represent its inferential order only if it is articulated into Fregean object and concept. If thought is articulated, then it is necessary that it is articulated in this way; it is then necessary in the sense that it is a condition of expressive rationality. On the antecedent of this conditional, Brandom says the following:

> Almost every sentence uttered by an adult native speaker is being uttered for the first time. […] The idea that there is a difference between correct and incorrect uses of sentences no one has yet used involves some sort of projection. […] it would seem the better part of valor to follow Frege in taking seriously the fact that the sentences we are familiar with do, after all, have parts. A two-stage compositional strategy for the explanation of projection would take it that what is settled by proprieties of use governing the smaller sample set of sentences, which is projected, is the correct use of the subsentential components into which they can be analyzed or decomposed. The correct use of these components is then to be understood as determining the correct use also of further combinations of them into novel sentences (Brandom 1994: 365–366).

Perhaps, these considerations establish that *our* thought is articulated into elements that are not themselves thoughts. But they do not even pretend to show that *thought as such* is so articulated. And Brandom's own definition of thought in terms of a suitably structured normative practice does not entail that it is in the nature of thought to have elements other than thoughts; if his account is correct, then this is inessential. So Brandom demonstrates that predicative structure is necessary under a condition, and he argues that the condition obtains in our case. He does not show, and his doctrine appears to be incompatible with the claim, that the condition obtains in virtue of the nature of thought. But if the antecedent of the conditional is not necessary in this sense, then the conditional does not confer this kind of necessity on the consequent. And this is required of a transcendental deduction of a form of thought: it must show that the form is not merely a feature our thought happens to have, but a feature of thought as thought. Brandom's deduction establishes this result only conditionally, while the condition itself remains a brute fact about our thought. Brandom's argument affords deep insight into what Fregean predication is. But it does not show why it is, for it presupposes that thought is articulated. Kant may explain us why that is.

5. Kant on the source of the distinction of subject and predicate

If Frege's philosophy of thought were viable, it would deliver a transcendental deduction of predicative structure: it would represent this structure as grounded in the nature of thought, namely in the deductive order that defines thought. But as we saw in section three, the claim that thought as such bears the deductive structure represented by the predicate calculus entails that there is a domain of the Fregean objects, an idea that has proved incoherent. There are two ways of responding to this situation. One can hold on to Frege's notion that predicative structure is inferential order; then one must give up the claim that predication is the form of thought as such. This is Quine's and Brandom's response: they assume a self-standing realm of holophrastic thought that acquires predicative structure as a certain kind of inferential order is imposed upon it. I shall now represent Kant as responding in the opposite manner. He holds on to the idea that thought as thought bears predicative structure, but, if we allow ourselves this anachronism, rejects Frege's attempt to find the source of this structure in the merely logical employment of the understanding.

In the passage I quoted above, Kant asserts that the distinction of subject and predicate is not to be found in the merely logical employment of the understanding, but rather in its relation to sensory intuition: a judgment that refers to intuition

necessarily brings its object under the category of substance. Let me quote the passage again:

> As regards *the merely logical employment* of the understanding, it remains *undetermined* to which of the two concepts the function of the subject, and to which the function of the predicate, is to be assigned. […] But through the category of substance, when I bring the concept of body under it, it is *determined*: that *its empirical intuition in experience* must always be considered as subject and never as mere predicate (my emphasis).

The concept of substance is a formal concept: it describes what it applies to in terms of the form of judgments in which it figures. The form is predication, but a different kind of predication from the one Frege expounds. We will see that a substance is not a Fregean object. Kant's categories describe forms in virtue of which thought refers to intuition. But how can it be necessary for thought to bear a certain form in order to refer to sensory experience? Here, we must take into account that what is given in intuition necessarily is in time. As Kant puts it, time is the form of intuition.[9] Hence, a form in virtue of which thought refers to intuition is a form in virtue of which thought represents its object as temporal. Pure concepts of an object then are pure concepts of something in time. Kant holds that the concept of substance is a pure time determination.

The *First Analogy* in the *Critique of Pure Reason* states that intuition-dependent thought essentially bears a predicative structure expressed by the formal concepts of substance and state because only in virtue of this form thought refers to something temporal. According to a popular reading, the *Analogies* have an epistemological topic and treat the question how we can ascertain temporal relations. On the reading I will propose, the *Analogies* have, consistent with the title of that part of the *Critique*, a logical topic: they expound the forms of temporal thought. The *First Analogy* reads: "All appearances contain the permanent (substance) as the object itself, and the changing as its mere determination, i.e. as a way in which the object exists" (Kant 1787: 124, A182).

Kant says all appearances contain two elements: something that persists and something that changes. More precisely, all appearances contain what persists *as the object* and what can change *as a way in which the object exists*. So the necessary articulation of appearances is a kind of predication: its elements are an object and how this object is. Kant (1787: 165, A187/B 230) calls the persisting object a *substance* and its changing determination a *state*.[10] The *First Analogy*, then, describes a kind of predicative unity, the unity of substance and state, and claims that it is the unity of temporal thought as such. Here is Kant's proof of this theorem.

> (1) All appearances are in time, in which alone as substratum […] being simultaneous as well as succession can be represented. (2) Thus the time in which all

> change of appearances is to be thought remains and does not change; for it is that in which alone being simultaneous or after one another can be represented as determinations of it. (3) Now time cannot by itself be perceived. (4) Consequently we must encounter in the objects of perception, i.e. in the appearances, the substratum, which represents time *überhaupt*, and on which all change or being simultaneous can be perceived through the relation of the appearances to it in the apprehension. (5) But the substratum of all that is real is […] the substance, on which all that belongs to existence can be thought only as determination.[11]

Let me go through the proof sentence by sentence. The first sentence recalls a claim of the *Transcendental Aesthetic* according to which the representation of time precedes the representation of temporal relations because, as Kant puts it in his dissertation, "*post* se invicem [sunt], quae existunt *temporibus diversis*, quemadmodum *simul* sunt, quae existunt *tempore eodem*": to be after one another is to be at different times, and to be simultaneous with one another is to be at the same time.[12] I think we can understand this claim as follows. One does not perceive that something is after something simply in virtue of first perceiving the one and then perceiving the other. A sequence of perceptions is not a perception of a sequence. One may represent the members of a sequence without representing their sequence, i. e. the unity of the members. In the case of a temporal sequence, the relevant unity is the unity of time: someone represents a temporal sequence only if she represents its members as being in time. It follows that a judgment that represents its object as temporal must be articulated; it must distinguish a time from what is at this time. In the second sentence, Kant explains that the terms of temporal relations are therefore represented in time as *determinations of time*: A term *A* of temporal relations is at a time *t*, and hence is in time — this repeats the first sentence. And if *A* is at *t*, then *A* determines time in the sense that it determines that part of it, *t*. Hence, the form of a temporal judgment appears to be "*A* at *t*". But, and this is the third sentence, time by itself cannot be perceived; "*t*" does not refer to something given in intuition. Evidently, the use of such names is the result of theory and not part of the basic form of expression of what is given in intuition. In the fourth sentence, Kant infers that we must encounter among the objects of perception something that represents time. I understand this as follows. A term of temporal relations is a determination of time. But it is not possible to represent it as a determination of a time by naming this time and bringing it under that determination. How then can something be represented as being at a time? Kant answers that what is given in intuition — an appearance — contains an item that represents time itself in the sense that *something is apprehended as a determination of time in virtue of being apprehended as a determination of it*. When we apprehend *A* and *B* as determinations of this item, then we apprehend *A* and *B* as following, or simultaneous with, one another. Kant says all appearances contain an item such that other things are

perceived as being temporally related through the relation they bear to it *in the apprehension*. A relation in the apprehension is a *logical relation*, not a real relation;[13] it is the unity of an object and its determinations. So what is given in intuition or what is real, insofar as it is capable of bearing temporal relations to other things, is a determination of something we encounter in intuition as well; the latter is called substance. We perceive that *A* is after or simultaneous with *B*, only if we apprehend *A* and *B* as determinations of time. And we apprehend *A* and *B* as determinations of time, not by predicating *A* and *B* of a time, as in "*A* at t_1, *B* at t_2", but by predicating *A* and *B* of a substance as in "*S* was *A* and is *B*". This completes the proof.[14]

A temporal judgment refers to a permanent substance and its changing states. The concepts of substance and state describe a kind of predication. Frege's concept-script does not represent this kind of predication. His notation is to represent mathematical thought; hence, the idea of time is not internal to it. Various attempts have been made to represent the logical form of temporal thought in the predicate calculus. Wilson (1955: section II), for example, claims that temporal thought bears the form "*x* is *F*-at-*t*". But "is *F*-at-*t*" refers to a Fregean concept, not to a changing state; no content can be given to the idea of something's changing in respect of this determination. David Lewis (1986: 202–204) argues that temporal thought has the form "*x*-at-*t* is *F*". But "*x*-at-*t*" refers to a Fregean object, not to a substance; no sense attaches to the idea of such a thing's changing in respect of its determinations.[15] The predicate calculus reveals the form of a thought in virtue of which it falls under a deductive order. The concepts of substance and state, by contrast, express a form in virtue of which thought refers to intuition. It cannot be expected that the formal concepts that express the pure idea of something in time will line up with formal concepts defined in terms of the deductive order of the predicate calculus.

Fregean predication is atemporal, hence in his concept-script time consciousness can only appear as a feature of the content of the judgment: "*A* at *t*". But this is not the basic form of an empirical judgment; for time cannot be perceived. A thought is temporal, not in virtue of its elements, but in virtue of the unity of its elements. Consciousness of time is not a content of thought, but a form. It is a form of predication that contains a contrast of time: "*S* was/is *A*". A substance joins with a state under the bipolar nexus of tense, "was/is". A judgment of this form distinguishes a time from what is at this time by means of its form. "*S* was *A*" is defined by its contrast to "*S* is *A*"; thus both represent *S* under *A* as something that may be at different times. By the same token, "*S* was *A* and is *B*" represents *A* and *B* as being at different times.

This is Kant's account of the necessity of predication: only predicative thought is capable of representing something temporal. If thought essentially refers to

intuition, then the fundamental form of predication is not the atemporal predicative nexus of the predicate calculus exemplified in judgments such as "5 is prime". It is the bipolar nexus of tense found in judgments such as "Theaitetos is/was asleep". Surely more must be said here (see Rödl 2005). For example, if the above reasoning is sound, it shows that tense cannot be reduced to reference to times as Quine thinks. But neither can it be construed as an operator, as Prior thinks, for if tense is a form of predication, then it cannot be iterated. But I hope I have said enough to convey the idea of a form of thought in virtue of which thought is temporal and, hence, refers to what is given in intuition.

6. Conclusion

Frege, Quine and Brandom share the idea that the inner articulation of thought can only consist in its inferential order. I believe the attraction of this idea lies in the fact that it appears to do no more than express the fundamental insight that only thought itself can be the source of its forms. The forms of the intellect must be its own either in the sense of being its nature or in the sense of being its work. Nothing other than thought can force a form upon it. Herein lies the autonomy of thought. I mentioned the view (which Dummett finds too coarse to be entertained) that the forms of thought have their origin in sensory intuition: intuition presents us with a world that is articulated in a certain manner, and we shape our thought accordingly. If this view were the only alternative to the inferentialist account of the structure of thought, then there would be no alternative to this account. But Kant does not claim that the forms of thought have their origin in intuition. Rather, he contends that the forms of thought are the ways in which thought refers to intuition. It is incompatible with the autonomy of the intellect that intuition be the source of the forms of thought; forms of thought cannot derive *from experience*. But this does not mean that the forms of the intellect cannot derive from thought's *relation to experience*. If thought essentially depends on receptive intuition, then the forms in virtue of which thought refers to intuition define its own nature. It is then no infringement on the autonomy of the intellect, if its forms are forms of relating to intuition. These forms express its nature, a nature that includes its unity with a faculty of receptivity. This brings me back to the beginning of the paper: it is the proper understanding of the unity of intellect and sensibility that is at issue in Brandom's and Kant's deductions of the predicative structure of thought.

Notes

1. Translations are mine. I give the original text in the footnotes. "Alles Denken aber muß sich, es sei geradezu (directe), oder im Umschweife (indirecte), […] zuletzt auf Anschauungen, mithin, bei uns, auf Sinnlichkeit beziehen, weil uns auf andere Weise kein Gegenstand gegeben werden kann".

2. It might appear circular to present relations of contents as constitutive of those contents. We can dispel the air of circularity if we first describe a system of relations among utterances and attitudes that constitute contents (equivalence classes of utterances and attitudes that have the same content), and then in a second step redescribe those relations as relations of these contents.

3. "So war die Funktion des *kategorischen* Urteils die des Verhältnisses des Subjekts zum Prädikat, z. B. alle Körper sind teilbar. Allein in Ansehung des bloß logischen Gebrauchs des Verstandes blieb es unbestimmt, welchem von beiden Begriffen die Funktion des Subjekts, und welchem die des Prädikats man geben wolle. Denn man kann auch sagen: Einiges Teilbare ist ein Körper. Durch die Kategorie der Substanz aber, wenn ich den Begriff des Körpers darunter bringe, wird es bestimmt: daß seine empirische Anschauung in der Erfahrung immer nur als Subjekt, niemals als bloßes Prädikat betrachtet werden müsse".

4. "Die allgemeine Logik abstrahieret […] von allem Inhalt der Erkenntnis, d. i. von aller Beziehung derselben auf das Objekt, und betrachtet nur die logische Form im Verhältnisse der Erkenntnisse auf einander".

5. Although Kant (1787: 113, B 140) uses the term "cognition" to refer to both concepts and judgments, general logic describes the relations of concepts in a judgment only insofar as they bear on the inferential relations of judgments.

6. A *concept-script* is a notation that reveals the form of a judgment in the sign that represents it. A concept-script thus introduces a description of expressions solely in terms of the form of judgments they help express. Let us call concepts serving in such a description *categorial syntactical concepts*. For example, if a judgment is articulated into object and determination, a concept-script will distinguish a part of its expression that refers to the object from a part that refers to the determination. We may call the former a name and the latter a predicate. The concepts of name and predicate are categorial syntactical concepts. A categorial syntactical concept describes an expression in terms of the form of judgments it helps express. A formal concept or category describes an object in terms of the form of judgments in which it figures. It follows that the same inquiry clarifies categorial syntactical concepts and formal concepts or categories, namely an inquiry into the forms of judgment that define both. Formal concepts and categorial syntactical concepts describe the form from different directions: from the direction of what is expressed in the one case, and from the direction of its expression in the other.

7. "Jedes Gesetz, das besagt, was ist, kann aufgefasst werden als vorschreibend, es solle im Einklang damit gedacht werden, und ist also in dem Sinn ein Denkgesetz. Das gilt von den geometrischen und physikalischen nicht minder als von den logischen. Diese verdienen den Namen 'Denkgesetze' nur dann mit mehr Recht, wenn damit gesagt sein soll, dass sie die allgemeinsten sind, die überall da vorschreiben, wie gedacht werden soll, wo überhaupt gedacht wird".

8. In the same vein, Frege (1976: 50) states that logic is the science of the mind or the thinker, as opposed to particular minds or thinkers. He means that the laws of logic are laws of thought, not in the sense that they describe how we happen to think, but in the sense that they define the nature of thought.

9. A difficult and momentous question arises at this point. It is whether it is an accident, a brute fact about us earthlings, that the form of our intuition is time, or whether time is the form of intuition of a subject of discursive thought as such. See Rödl (2005: part II).

10. "Daher ist alles, was sich verändert, *bleibend*, und nur *sein Zustand wechselt*".

11. "Alle Erscheinungen sind in der Zeit, in welcher, als Substrat […] das Zugleichsein sowohl als die Folge allein vorgestellt werden kann. Die Zeit also, in der aller Wechsel der Erscheinungen gedacht werden soll, bleibt und wechselt nicht; weil sie dasjenige ist, in welchem das Nacheinander- oder Zugleichsein nur als Bestimmungen derselben vorgestellt werden können. Nun kann die Zeit für sich nicht wahrgenommen werden. Folglich muß in den Gegenständen der Wahrnehmung, d.i. in den Erscheinungen, das Substrat anzutreffen sein, welches die Zeit überhaupt vorstellt, und an dem aller Wechsel oder Zugleichsein durch das Verhältnis der Erscheinungen zu demselben in der Apprehension wahrgenommen werden kann. Es ist aber das Substrat alles Realen […] die Substanz, an welcher alles, was zum Dasein gehört, nur als Bestimmung kann gedacht werden".

12. Kant (1770: § 14.1); see Kant (1787: 57, A 30/B 46).

13. Kemp Smith translates "in der Apprehension" as modifying the phrase that follows it: "wahrgenommen werden". But it modifies the phrase that precedes it: "das Verhältnis der Erscheinungen zu demselben".

14. I disregard the claim that "[the quantity of substance] in nature can be neither increased nor diminished". It is too difficult.

15. One may be tempted to represent the logical form of a temporal thought by the formula, "*x* is-at-*t F*". But this turns the logical copula "is" into a three-place predicate and thus is in effect equivalent to Wilson's proposal. Although the suggestion leads nowhere, it expresses a dim appreciation that the expression of time consciousness is neither a name, nor a predicate, but rather their nexus, or the form of predication. But this insight cannot be expressed as long as the predicate calculus is unreflectively assumed to be the appropriate frame for the representation of the logical form of temporal thought.

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Meaning, justification, and truth

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In order to compare two forms of radical pragmatism, inferentialism (as developed by Robert Brandom) and constructivism (as developed by Paul Lorenzen), the paper shows how we can represent states of affairs in the world by corresponding symbols in a metaphysically harmless, though seemingly non-inferential way, why not all justifications are inferential transitions, for example those that make heavy use of constructions, and why a prosentential analysis of truth is helpful but not sufficient.

Keywords: Constitutive norm, constructivism, correspondence, inferentialism, institutional order, justification, meaning, propositional content, radical pragmatism, truth.

Most forms of philosophical pragmatism present only a very general worldview. Its consequences are often as soft and vague as the vocabulary with which this philosophical perspective is characterized. Let me call *radical pragmatism* the philosophical endeavor to reconstruct the symbolic and cognitive structures of our life on a purely practical basis; and that means: to reconstruct them throughout without already referring to natural (or physical) or metaphysical entities, events, states of affairs or occurrences of some kind but rather, as (forms of) human activities, guided by institutional or social norms. Here, reconstruction is not to be understood just as one hypothetical explanation among others — something we are used to in science — but as a road to the right (or true) understanding of the reconstructed practical matters.

I will not enter into a debate about the task of a pragmatically shaped analytic philosophy, however. Rather, I directly approach the fact that, with the publication of Robert B. Brandom's book in 1994, we now have two versions of a far reaching pragmatic reconstruction program. These two versions have developed quite independently. The one is *philosophical constructivism*.[1] The other is Brandom's form of *inferentialism*.

My own proposals concerning the understanding of truth and content have developed from a constructivist basis.[2] I shall sketch them first. I will then proceed to remark on two problems, which arise within the corresponding reconstructions in Brandom's approach. Of course, a more thorough comparative analysis would take a whole series of lectures.

Our use of the word "true" cannot, I think, be characterized by something like a definition or by *one* general characterization. This does not mean that there is no rigorous way for clarifying the so-called concept of truth. As in many other cases, we are faced here with a situation where the use of a word comprises a variety of different elements; elements which are nevertheless connected in a way that justifies and explains why they are expressed by, or performed with, the same expression, namely the word "true".

Let me start with what we may call the *statement* use of "true". I illustrate this use with a very elementary example: We are all able to produce figures or shapes of a cross (like "×"); and we can do so in nearly all circumstances: with a stick in the sand, with a piece of chalk on a blackboard, a pencil on paper, a keyboard on the monitor. We could — by a sort of convention or agreement — subject the use of this practical possibility to certain restrictions. For example, we could use the figure (as a sign, as we will put it later) only when a mountain pass is open, e.g., when it is not barred by snow or by traffic regulations. (In each situation it is assumed that we know the contextually relevant mountain pass.) When we produce the cross under this agreement, the performance of putting a cross at the right place turns into what we might call an *elementary statement*.

The establishment of an agreement or convention by an explicit articulation of the restrictive conditions involved, normally would be called a *definition* of the cross. Obviously, we could learn the convention also by *exercising* the corresponding symbolic practice, e.g. when driving around Switzerland in winter. This shows that it is not necessary to have a description of those situational elements and features, which make an intended performance of our statement correct. In many elementary cases we learn the situational distinctions for the *correct* and — on the other hand — the *wrong* use of statements just by paradigms.

Connected with a practice of making statements, there is a very simple and basic use of the word "true": To say that a statement is true often only means that it is correct to make it. We might perhaps add that by using the word "true" instead of the word "correct" we emphasize at the same time that we deal with a *statement*, not with another kind of symbolic act. We can easily see how this use of the word "true" is extended from statements to sentences: A *sentence* is true in relation to certain situations, if stating it in these situations would be correct.

Normally, the intention of making certain statements is not just a *manifestation* of the correct use of statements in the sense described. Statements serve also the purpose of exchanging (joint) observations (e.g., when walking together in the mountains). But perhaps in most cases they are used in order to convey *information*. When we exercise, and thereby learn, the use of certain statements only *in* corresponding situations, or with respect to shared observations, the statements do not have much informational value *about* these situations or observations. The information they confer then would only concern features of the situation — with which we already are or could be acquainted in some more immediate way.

But in a wide range of their use, statements correspond to situations *not* directly accessible to the addressees. Even the proponent of a statement may rely on mediated information only, not on direct access to the relevant situation. However, we normally expect the informational content to rest, in the end, on some direct knowledge like that from immediate observation.

There is a grammatical path leading directly from the informational case to what we might call, misleadingly enough, the *correspondence aspect of truth*. If we know or presuppose that a proponent *P* of a statement *s* is, firstly, sufficiently competent to perform statements of this sort, and that secondly, he can be trusted, we can draw from her or his producing *s* what I propose to call a *pragmatic inference*: The "premise" of such an inference is not a sentence but a practical event, namely *P's* performing *s*. The conclusion is that the situational conditions under which this performance is correct prevail (are effective). — If we have direct access to these conditions it would normally not be necessary, or make any sense, to draw a conclusion instead of relying on one's own 'knowledge'.

In this sense of a possible pragmatic inference, a statement or the corresponding sentence can *represent* certain possible features of a situation (a "*Sachverhalt*" or "state of affairs" in the terminology of the early Wittgenstein). These features (conditions) hold in case the statement is true, i.e. correctly performed.

Pragmatic inferences depend on two conditions:

1. The involved use of the statements already is a common institution for the participants of the representational game. This includes that the participants are all competent users of the language in question.
2. Proponents of statements can be trusted to do their best in producing correct linguistic performances.

Let us now add a little more complexity to our simple picture of statement use and thereby get more material for later distinctions. The informational and the representational aspect of statements and their truth can easily be extended from the elementary cases considered to more complex cases like assertions and the commitments to give justifications they involve.

From the elementary cases there is only one further step to a use of "true" which contains the claim that there is or should be a *justification* for the statement or assertion in question — when it is used or 'meant' in the 'normal' sense. And what I called the pragmatic inference in this case could be formulated along the following lines: A statement or an assertion of this kind points to or represents the situations in which it is or would be justified.

One very common group of such statements is connected with the practice of following (or applying) a certain procedure — and thereby producing a certain result. Think, for instance, of calculations. We can look at such a situation from two angles. First, we may just state that we can reach or have reached a certain result by certain steps. From the point of view of controlling such a statement we might say: Undertaking these steps shows, secondly, their feasibility, and thus is a *justification* of the *result*. At the same time, we have arrived at a *justification* of the *statement* that says: this result can be reached within this frame. In calculating a certain result, we justify the statement that this sort of calculation can produce this result. Under this description the correctness of the statement — and in this sense — its 'truth' is internally connected with its justification: To be true *means* to be justifiable (in a certain way) here.

Another line of justification for elementary statements is established when we embed them into a system of *terminological rules* (as they were called in classical constructivist jargon). If e.g. we have a rule "violet → bluish" for color terms, we can justify calling things bluish by applying the rule to correct statements of the form "x is violet". Or if we look at our first example, we may have a rule saying that "open" excludes "closed" — which leads us to a justification of negative statements.

My next consideration is concerned with the activities of argumentation and justification in a more general way: If a statement is not accepted (is disagreed with), we may either just leave it at that or, perhaps, we withdraw the statement (more or less explicitly). Another reaction would be to *argue* for the acceptance of it, i.e. give reasons for its being correct (correctly *made*!). If it comes to argumentation, we may also, instead of just stating something, *assert* what we state or have stated. This means that we explicitly incur an obligation to bring forward arguments for the "acceptability" of our statement, that is to justify ("begründen") the statement.

If we thus claim that a statement *a* is correct by asserting *a seriously*, we must have a justification for *a* at our disposal; at least we should be able to show a way, a procedure, which in the end leads to a justification of *a*. Or shorter: To speak of a claim that is seriously made means that we must be entitled to it by having a justification at our disposal.

There is a *weak* sense in which justifying a claim *a* just means having (good) reasons for *a*. Somebody might claim, for example, that a lot of snow has fallen during the last 24 hours in the Upper Engadin (Switzerland) — and name as reasons

the kind of clouds hanging over the Engadin valley and, in addition, a weather forecast of yesterday's local newspaper. All this is, under normal conditions, no conclusive evidence — in contrast to the hourly weather report (not the forecast) of Swiss Radio that the persons involved in the argument (normally) take to be as reliable as reliability can go; or in contrast to a (normal) mathematical proof.

I shall speak of a justification in the strong or *strict* sense of the word, if we focus on conclusive evidence. In contrast to all sorts of weaker arguments for or against certain claims, this means that such justifications leave no room for further doubt — at least for the time being, and not in the Cartesian understanding of doubt, which is rather silly in practical life. — A separate investigation on what we call "conclusive evidence" would surely be helpful here. But at the moment I shall have to rely on the reader's competence in handling the distinction between strict and weaker justifications in normal cases. (By the way: No counter-reasons involved, prima facie reasons may often be as conclusive as we could hope for.)

Let me now change to pragmatically based distinctions concerning *meaning* and *content*. According to a pragmatic understanding of language, the meaning of linguistic expressions (of sentences and of meaningful parts of sentences, looked at from a sentence-holistic viewpoint) is what we *do* or *can* do with them. But now a further specification is necessary, namely that we should understand the relation between 'meaning' and 'use' *institutionally*. This means: the term "meaning" refers to the institutional order (Wittgenstein's 'grammar'), which we *actualize* when we perform a linguistic act. There is again a lot more to say about this — if we want to prevent a misunderstanding of these very general statements. But my intention is to deal with some special problems; so I shall leave it at that.

How shall we — in a pragmatic perspective — handle objects which sometimes are called "abstract" and play a prominent role in non-pragmatic comments on meaning, like '*meanings*' themselves or '*contents*' or '*propositions*'? Once we have come to see it, there seems to be a rather straightforward answer to this question. The answer has to do with our use of an object or an act (which often involves handling or producing an object) in a *symbolic* way. But what is a *symbolic* way of doing something, especially doing something with something? A symbolic action (*s*) develops from its underlying non-symbolic basis (*a*), when we, by (social) agreement, impose certain restrictions (*R*) on the non-symbolic action *a*. Let us call these restrictions *norms* in a very general sense of the word "norm".

There then are two possibilities: Either, in performing *a* we obey these norms, but in doing this we (finally) just intend to do *a*. Here, the restrictions function only as *regulative* norms. On the other hand, the restrictive norms *R* may be understood as *constitutive* for a new 'level' or 'form' of action, namely *s;* for *s* superimposed on *a*, *a* then is (only) a sort of "carrier action". Here, i.e. in following the

norms *R*, which by agreement restrict *a*, there is a further, separate, the main and in some sense final, pragmatic intention. We can now say: We perform the *symbolic act s* by performing *a* under certain norms. And performing *s* cannot be done without performing some carrier action. We cannot follow the norms constitutive for *s* "*per se*", independently of doing something else.

Normally there will be other acts, one of them being, let us say, *b*, on which we can impose the same restrictive norms *R*. Therefore we may perform *s* also by performing *b* under *R*. To use *a* or *b* or both of them for this purpose displays their *conventional* character for the symbolic action *s*. In other words: *s* may be "abstracted" from any of its possible carrier acts. For an illustration, let us look at our use of the cross or the word "open": Normally, when we speak of the use of a sentence *a*, for example the one-symbol-sentence "×", it is essential for our conversion that the cross is involved and not e.g. the word "open". But sometimes, in certain contexts maybe often, it does not matter which item of a whole variety of sentences we take. There are a variety of sentences, which are all used "in the same way". Stating that they all have "the same use" already gives us a use of the word "use" which does not depend on what we do with a special sentence *a*. (All of this must be read in the *type sense* of "sentence"!)

With this transition, we abstract, so to speak, the *institutional design* of a sentence use *as such* from its realization, or, perhaps better, from its actualization by the use of a particular sentence in certain situations. Speaking of *the* use of a sentence therefore has two aspects: the *abstract* use common to a whole variety of sentences and what we do with them — and, on the other hand, the actualizing uses of special "carrier" sentences.

I take it that the bulk of what we normally call the *content* of a sentence is best reconstructed as its *abstract use*.

By restricting both senses of sentence use to a special context and practice, it is possible to sort out further concepts of content, belonging to certain artificial terms in philosophical semantics. Thus we may consider the use of a sentence *a* in the network of reasoning and argumentation only. Let us call it the *proposition a*. The corresponding restricted *abstract* use of *a* can be called its (*a's*) *propositional content*. This last proposal would be a reconstruction very much in accordance with the meaning of the term "beurteilbarer Inhalt" or "judgeable content" in Frege's early writings.

I shall now conclude with a comparison of philosophical constructivism thus outlined with an inferentialist line of reconstruction. I shall concentrate on two aspects of the whole architecture of Brandom's enterprise. One is the *inferential* reconstruction of propositional content; the other is the prosentential understanding of truth.

As to the first point, I see no problem with the following order of thought:

1. to identify a more or less well defined network of inferential arguments or moves in reasoning;
2. to consider the role or place of a sentence *a* therein;
3. to talk of the *inferential content* of *a* relative to this restriction of *a's* abstract use —
4. whatever the function of this should be.

But if I see things right, Brandom cannot just, evasively, withdraw into such a weak form of inferentialism. He must rather defend the claim that inferential content is either the meaning or use of sentences (when we use them to make assertions or claims) — or their propositional content. This results from the whole design of his book. With a certain understanding of inference, none of these alternatives can work. I will show this for the second claim. For the first it will follow immediately.

Of course, all depends on the notion of *inference* involved. A first and very common understanding is this: drawing an inference is an application of an inferential scheme which leads us from premises of a certain sort or form to corresponding conclusions. The inferential schemes operate on sentences or their assertions. They often are made explicit in the form of rules. Examples are the material terminological rules mentioned earlier in this article. These schemes are normally used in order to back up entitlement-preserving inferences in the sense of Brandom.

It is sufficient for my argument here to consider only entitlement preserving inference schemes. Such schemes are valid if they guarantee the justification of conclusions that fit the schemes in cases where the corresponding premises are justified. Should we say then that, in addition, only a certain input is needed, e.g. directly justified elementary observational statements, and the rest of the job of justification then is done by socially accepted inference schemes? In Brandom's formulations and examples, this picture is at least suggested.

Leaving the input problems aside, my main question is: Can we understand justifications throughout as applications of inferential schemes? There is indeed a whole group of justifications for which I do not see how they can be reconstructed in the form of inferential transitions. I shall call them *constructions*.

Symbolic and institutional constructions justify corresponding claims by their results, for example, possibility- or existence-claims by (showing and) doing things (including maybe doing very complicated linguistic things). They normally work in a direct way, not by mediation of a general scheme or rule.

Think of creative constructive proofs in mathematics. Institutional constructions might be a more relevant case, when we consider justifications for political

or economic alternatives by inventing an appropriate institutional form or design. There are also conceptual and terminological creations, which are crucial for the dispute over certain scientific claims.

Even if we can identify certain sentences, let us say *a*, *b*, as "premises" and a "conclusion", say, *c*, this does by no means imply that we apply a *rule* or inferential scheme or norm leading us from justified assertions *a*, *b* to a corresponding assertion *c*. The justification of *c* may just extend constructions that are essential for the justification of *a* and *b*, a sort of extension being e.g. quite usual for proofs of conditional mathematical existence claims.

To cut this consideration short: With the outlined notion of inference we find discursive moves that we cannot characterize as inferential steps. In this understanding, inferentialism cannot serve as a reconstruction of propositional content in the proposed sense.

Argumentation and justification (reasoning) in general are not deductive concepts, neither in a sense restricted to logical deduction, nor in a wider sense (prevailing in the examples of Brandom's book), which includes all sorts of so called "material" deductions or inferences.

Another option would be this:" Inference" might just *mean* justification. But then, justification works between sentences or the corresponding claims. When we, with this understanding in mind, infer the conclusion *c* from premises *a*, *b*, we claim that if *a*, *b* were justified we would, on that basis, have a justification for *c*. And this should normally mean that we *know* that the quality of being justified is transferred from *a*, *b* to *c*. Otherwise the inference might not be correct (whether by applying an inference scheme *or not*).

But even with this concept of "inference" one difficulty remains, namely that there are complicated constructive arguments (not just simple input-statements) that do not start from sentences or assertions or claims, though they include a lot of sentence use. Think again of linguistic (conceptual) constructions or reconstructions, e.g. the invention of complex subsententional arithmetical terms.

We are now turning to the "prosentential" analysis of truth. Let us take it that we have a truth-operator *T* and a selecting expression σ — σ may be working anaphorically or may consist of some characterization of certain claims or sentences like in 'what Joschka Fischer said about his wild years'. Let us use them to formulate a prosentential expression *T* σ. By applying *T* σ we are lead to a claim *a*: e.g. by identifying the assertion at which σ is pointing — or by picking out one of the claims *characterized* by σ.

Used in this way the operator *T* normally, in the basic cases, functions as a device for assenting to claims already made or mentioned. But obviously this prosentential meaning of "*T*" cannot be taken as a reconstruction of our common

truth concept: The use of the operator *T* instituted by the prosentential design is as strong or weak as the understanding of the corresponding claims *a*. And this means it is as strong or weak as the concept of justification involved in the commitment to justify *a*.

Obviously, justifications of the weak kind cannot establish truth, i.e. truth claims. If we have, for example, only some good reasons for a certain claim *a*, we often do not, on this basis, take *a* to be true. We may even explicitly doubt that this is the case, because we perhaps know, that other reasons should be considered that may speak against *a*.

This either leaves us with a weak understanding of justification (or inference), in which case we would have to give the concept of truth another (a more than prosentential) basis — or (second alternative) with the need to produce a strict version of justification, on which a prosentential use of "true" can stand. In both cases the prosentential approach does only part of the conceptual job, is only one element in a much more complex conceptual situation, and not a fundamental element.

Notes

1. The spirit and general orientation of philosophical constructivism is best demonstrated by Kamlah and Lorenzen (1984); Lorenzen (1968); Lorenzen (1974), and Kambartel (1998a: 25–36). An essential part of philosophical constructivism is the project of finding a dialogical or argumentational foundation for formal logic (cf. Lorenzen and Lorenz (1978) und my critique in Kambartel (1979b: 216–228) and Kambartel (1982: 41–52)).

2. My own cooperation with philosophical constructivism is documented in Kambartel (1976a), Kambartel (1976b: 70–85), Kambartel (1979a: 195–205), and Kambartel (1981: 402–410). Later, my understanding of constructive analysis developed into a kind of late-Wittgensteinian Kantianism and I grew sceptical about the "grand design" of a normative reconstruction of language and the included ideals of methodological exactitude and theoretical generality. For a reflection of this reorientation see Kambartel (2000: 75–85), Kambartel (1989) and Kambartel (1998b).

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Motivating inferentialism

Comments on *Making it Explicit* (Ch. 2)

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Brandom's attempt to motivate inferentialism is found wanting on a number of grounds, including a scepticism about how much recommendation for inferentialism can be derived from the evident unsatisfactoriness of the representationalism Brandom contrasts it with, which seems to be a straw man. Brandom's appeal to authorities (Sellars, Frege, Dummett) falls flat; in particular, his reading of Frege's early work as inferentialist in Brandom's sense is a misinterpretation. Given the programmatic character of Brandom's recommendation for inferentialism, the quality of the motivation he offers for it matters more than he has acknowledged.

Keywords: Begriffsschrift, conditional, deontic structure, formalism, foundationalism, Frege, inferentialist, Kant, linear explanation, pragmatism, representationalism, semantic self-consciousness, sociality.

1. One way Brandom (1994)[1] tries to motivate inferentialism is by putting it in competition with representationalism, which he describes as "the traditional order of semantic explanation" (p. 92).

Representationalism takes a concept or concepts of representation as primitive, and offers to explain all the features of linguistic practice that are relevant to the fact that expressions are meaningful — for instance, and centrally, proprieties of inference — in terms of that concept or those concepts. Brandom has no difficulty in deprecating that order of explanation. On that basis he recommends an inversion of the order. We are to take the concept of inference as primitive, and explain everything else about the significance of language, including ultimately the capacity for representation, in terms of it.

Brandom focuses especially on a version of representationalism that takes designation as its primitive. According to this approach, we are to start with a supposedly self-standing understanding of the relation between a singular term and

its referent (and perhaps also that between a predicate and a member of whatever kind of things a theorist decides to count as the referents of predicates). Next we are to explain, on the basis of that relation (or those relations), the semantic significance of stringing words together into statements. And then we are to go on to explain how statements hang together in rationally sequential discourse, in particular arguments (p. 69).[2] Brandom introduces this as a "particularly unhelpful" version of representationalism (p. 94), but as he goes on he tends to take it as representative.[3]

2. A supposedly primitive understanding of relations of reference figures as a target in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), especially the early sections. I think it is helpful to compare Brandom's treatment with what happens there.

Wittgenstein's considerations are not, like Brandom's, directed against a "dominant tradition" in philosophical reflection about language. The supposedly self-standing understanding of the name-bearer relation that Wittgenstein considers is not something he depicts as a bad move in answering a good question, perhaps because it approaches things in the wrong order, so that the trouble is to be fixed by inverting the order. On the contrary, he suggests that the supposedly self-standing understanding of designation both reflects and encourages a characteristically philosophical attitude, in which the meaningfulness of language is experienced as a mystery. And his ultimate target is that attitude itself, rather than a choice of what order to proceed in when one lets it control one's thinking.

In the frame of mind Wittgenstein is concerned with, one supposes the key to the mystery is that words have the remarkable property of being words for things. This property looks remarkable — in a way that fits with seeing it as the key to a mystery — when one tries to focus on, say, the relation between a name and its bearer in abstraction from how cases of the relation figure in human life. That makes one prone to fall into a fetishistic superstition about linguistic expressions, or to think of their possession of meaning as "a hocus-pocus which can be performed only by the soul" (compare Wittgenstein 1953, § 454). And when that has happened, it is too late to bring the role linguistic expressions play in human life back into view. What we do with words takes on the appearance of rags and dust, from which one *knows* that a mouse could not come into being, so there is no point in looking at the details (ibid., § 52). The cure for this trouble is to stop trying to consider the relation between a name and an object in abstraction from its role in human life, in hopes of being able to exploit the idea of the relation in a radical explanation of the very idea of meaning, given from outside the standpoint of our lived familiarity with language. We need to take the measure of the fact that it is only in a language-game that an object can have a name at all (ibid., § 49).

So we should not see what people do with language as a topic to be broached only after we have catered for the fact that expressions have semantic properties. Rather, linguistic practice is a context within which alone talk of expressions as meaningful makes sense.

That might be described as a kind of pragmatism. But there is no whiff of Brandom's proposal to invert an order of explanation. Wittgenstein does not suggest that we must first describe the needed context in a way that avoids the concept we were puzzling over — the concept of a word for something — and then explain the concept we were puzzling over in terms of such supposedly prior concepts of linguistic practice. The idea is not that we need to postpone using the concept we were puzzling over until we have entitled ourselves to it by some such explanation. What made the concept seem mysterious was the attempt to understand it in abstraction from a necessary context. When we put the context back into the picture, there is no need to forswear using the concept of names for objects in the course of describing the area of human life it helps to shape. Our problem was not that we were making the wrong choice of primitive, and the cure is not to fix on some other concepts as primitive.

What we find in Wittgenstein, then, is a well-placed negative response to a supposedly primitive understanding of relations of reference, but with no tendency to motivate an inverted order of explanation.

3. As I said, Wittgenstein's target is not a tradition in philosophy. In fact there is ground for scepticism about Brandom's picture of a dominant tradition, to be superseded by inferentialism.

Brandom is surely on the right track when he depicts the priority of the propositional, the centrality of judgement, as a Kantian innovation, though one anticipated by strands in Leibniz and Spinoza (pp. 79–80, 93–94). Kant here moves towards a conception of logic that comes to maturity in Frege, who insists on abstracting concepts out of judgements rather than building judgements out of concepts (pp. 80–82). Frege definitively supersedes a conception according to which logic starts with terms and works up to judgements.

As Brandom reads this, Kant's move begins to overturn a hitherto dominant representational understanding of "the proper order of semantic explanation" (p. 79). And since Kant situates the idea of judgement in the context of the idea of reasoning, Brandom takes him to be at least incipiently a proponent of the inferentialist order (p. 92).[4]

On this view, Kant points towards the right way to execute a philosophical task his precursors were already engaged on, though, apart from those anticipations in the rationalists, they approached things in the wrong order. But it seems wrong to suppose Kant's move is a new, or nearly new, contribution to an old project. The

attribution of centrality to propositional content, which needs to be understood in the context of reason, belongs with the fact that Kant is posing a new question. Kant brings into view a new way of finding philosophical problems in meaningfulness, or — better, since it is anachronistic to treat Kant as a philosopher of language — objective purport, a puzzlement that could not have exercised a medieval logician, who might indeed have begun with a logic of terms. The idea of objective purport first comes into focus as a distinctively philosophical issue around Kant's time, precisely because of the entanglement with an idea of responsiveness to reason that Kant registers by making judgement central. This entanglement poses new questions in modern philosophy, because there is an increasing sense that reason resists integration into nature, on a newly sharp conception of nature made available by the maturation of the natural sciences. Perhaps some of the early modern philosophers have an inkling of this new problem about objective purport, but it does not come properly into view until Kant. So if some early moderns still begin logic with a logic of terms, like medieval logicians, that does not reveal them as accepting a representationalist approach to questions Kant is addressing when he makes judgement central. They are not considering Kant's questions. That is a way of putting a Kantian criticism: his predecessors do not recognize an obligation he envisages for philosophy. He is precisely not urging a different way to perform a task he takes his precursors to be already trying to perform, though they do things in the wrong order.

The puzzlement Kant is addressing is not intelligibly felt unless objective purport is conceived in the context of reason. As with the context of linguistic practice that Wittgenstein insists on, that does not imply that the concepts that figure in delineating the required context are to be taken as primitive. There is no ground here for seeing Kant as incipiently inferentialist. And this account of the Kantian innovation makes it problematic whether we can really understand the frame of mind that would need to be characteristic of Brandom's "majority tradition", whose members supposedly pursue a different order in addressing the very question Kant addresses with the move Brandom reads as proto-inferentialist. The idea would need to be that we can begin on alleviating that felt puzzlement by invoking concepts of representational meaningfulness that we take to be intelligible independently of the role of objective purport in reasoning. But this conception of what primitive concepts might be available conflicts with a condition for even feeling the difficulty about objective purport that Kant addresses. This makes Brandom's "majority tradition" look like a fiction. It is not clear that his foil for inferentialism is anything but a straw man.[5]

Why does this matter? Well, Brandom pays almost no attention to the question whether semantic explanation should be linear, with some concepts selected

as primitive. As long as he can make it seem that there is a real school of thought that proceeds in that way, although its choice of primitive concepts is wrong, the assumption that what is called for is the right choice of primitives can look innocent, not in need of defence. But if his competition between orders of linear explanation is unreal, the assumption can no longer go unremarked, and it becomes more evident that from the hopelessness of the representationalism he sets up as inferentialism's competitor, he cannot really derive any recommendation for the inverted order.[6]

4. The designational representationalism that Brandom tends to take as representative starts with semantic relations between subsentential expressions and elements of extra-linguistic reality. Now Brandom casts his inverted order of explanation as matching that but in the opposite order. His own notion of representation, to be reached at the end of the explanatory procedure, mirrors that of a designational representationalist. This shows in the fact that he does not think representation is explicitly on the scene until he has arrived, in Chapter 8, at locutions for attributions of commitments in which the attributor explicitly relates the attributee to elements of extra-linguistic reality (as in "Ralph believes of the man he saw at the beach that he is a spy").

Brandom's designational representationalists think of representation as a generic relation, species of which hold between names and objects, predicates and (perhaps) properties (or sets), and — derivatively — sentences and states of affairs (pp. 69–70). This conception is quite suspect. It does not become innocuous just by being reconceived as something we reach at the end of our story rather than something we begin with, with the first two species derivative from the third rather than the other way around. But Brandom seems content to think of the final stage in the inferentialist explanatory procedure — providing for the representational dimension of discursive content — as making explicit just such a conception of representational relations.[7]

This makes a difference to how he conceives what is needed for him to claim a successful completion of the inferentialist project — providing for the representational dimension of meaningfulness in terms of a prior understanding of inference.

To my ear, we have locutions that are explicitly representational as soon as we have "that" clauses, as soon as we have the idea of propositional content. If someone is said to assert that things are thus and so, she is thereby said to represent things as being thus and so. Of course this need not, and should not, be parsed as expressing a relation, representing, that holds between the person, or her words, and a state of affairs — the sort of thing someone might purport to understand as a species of a genus that also comprises the relation of names to their bearers.

Now one could surely have a concept of inference without mastering the explicitly relational locutions that Brandom reaches at the end of his story. So it is a live possibility that the concept of inference is primitive with respect to the concepts expressed in those locutions. But it is quite another matter with the concept of asserting that things are thus and so. Indeed Brandom himself, in Chapter 3, seems to concede that the concept of inference is not primitive with respect to the concept of asserting that things are thus and so, when he says not only "Asserting cannot be understood apart from inferring" but also "Inferring cannot be understood apart from asserting" (p. 158). It is only the conception of representation I am questioning, a mirror image of the designational representationalist conception, that can make it look as if these remarks do not yet traffic in a concept of representation. But if they do, the second one amounts to an admission — contrary to the whole thrust of the recommendation for inferentialism — that the concept of inference is not primitive with respect to the concept of representation.[8]

5. Perhaps the moral we should extract from Brandom's acknowledgement that inferring is not prior to asserting is that "inferentialism" is, after all, not a good label for the position he means to recommend. What he really wants us to see as primitive is the idea of a deontic structure of commitments and entitlements with rationally consequential relations between them. A characterization in those terms does not evidently presuppose any prior grasp of semantic or even language-related concepts. And now the claim is that a description of a practice given exclusively in those terms can suffice to reveal that the practice described is discursive — to display the moves made in the practice as assertions. If the idea of inference is on a level with the idea of assertion, we would become entitled to see the transitions between moves as inferences at the same time. So on this reading of Brandom the idea of inference and the idea of conceptual content are to be understood together, in terms of the prior ideas of commitment, entitlement, and practice-sanctioned consequence.

In his Preface (p. xxii), Brandom says the project of explaining the very idea of discursive linguistic performances is executed in Chapters 3 and 4. In fact his claim (at least sometimes) is that giving sufficient conditions for a practice to be conceptually contentful *überhaupt* is done before he turns, in Chapter 4, to specifically empirical and practical conceptual content (pp. 221, 234); so, presumably, in Chapter 3.

In assessing this claim, it is important not to let the concept of inference in too soon. If transitions between moves in a practice are inferences, then surely some of the moves are assertions. But that does not vindicate the claim, now that we have it in a form in which the idea of inference is on a level with the idea of discursive performances rather than prior to it. If it is open to question whether, given

only the description of a deontic structure, the moves in a practice are displayed as including assertions, it is equally open to question whether the transitions between moves are thereby displayed as inferences. It is the same question, given the acknowledgement that assertion and inference are two sides of a single coin. One cannot justify an answer to one form of the question — "Are these moves recognizably assertions?" — by helping oneself to an answer to the other — "Are these transitions recognizably inferences?".

Now as far as I can see, the deontic structure — involving commitments, entitlements, and rationally consequential relations between them — that Brandom puts in place in Chapter 3 is consistent with the possibility that a game describable in those terms is just a game, a behavioral repertoire whose moves do not have a significance that points outside the game, so that the moves are not assertions and the transitions are not inferences. It makes no difference to this if we drop the more demanding version of Brandom's claim, according to which the material of Chapter 3 suffices for discursivity, and bring in a role for experiential input and behavioral output, the topics of Chapter 4. Now we have a game in which players' entitlements are partly determined by features of the observable environment, and some of their commitments are discharged in non-linguistic action. But nothing in the description of the deontic structure ensures that these pointers outside the game have anything to do with the sort of meaningfulness that would reveal the practice as linguistic.

To make this vivid, consider a thought-experiment of a kind Michael Dummett has exploited in a related context (Dummett 1973: 295, 298). Martians convey information to one another in a way extremely unlike ours — so much so that the hypothesis that human vocalizations are, among other things, our way of doing that does not immediately suggest itself to Martian anthropologists. And Martians have a rich repertoire of not necessarily competitive games: rule-governed behavior with no external point, behavior they engage in just for fun. Perhaps the fun lies in the intellectual challenge of keeping track of the positions of players. Now suppose they see human vocal behavior as just such a game. It does not occur to them that the behavior has meaning, except in the sense in which, say, chess moves have meaning. They realize that the human practice they are investigating includes inheriting entitlements from other players, and deferring to those others the responsibility for vindicating the inherited entitlements, but the Martians do not see inheriting an entitlement as a case of having it affirmed to one that things are thus and so. They see it as just another complexity in how the concept of a position in the game works. They do not see moves in the game as assertions, and (the other side of the coin) they do not see transitions between moves as inferences. But they miss nothing about linguistic behavior that is capturable with the concepts of commitment, entitlement, and practice-sanctioned consequence.

This connects with a point about the sociality that would be revealed by a description of (what is in fact) a linguistic practice in those deontic-structural terms. In Brandom's depiction of such a practice, players keep score on one another, and make their moves in awareness that others who witness the moves will be keeping score. One can acquire entitlements from others whose moves one witnesses, and one can defer the responsibility of vindicating the entitlements to those others. But moves need not be *addressed* to those who acquire entitlements by witnessing them. It is only in the scorekeeping context, for instance in challenges to entitlements and responses to challenges, that Brandom's game specifically provides for moves to be addressed by one player to another. The deontic-structural description does not display players as taking an interest in anything beyond the deontic status of the players (themselves and others). Nothing in the deontic-structural description ties this interest to a concern with how things are outside the game, except in so far as how things are outside the game affects a player's deontic status, specifically her entitlements. A description of the practice in these terms does not reveal the kind of cooperativeness — sociality — that shows itself in a concern to *inform* others of things. And this is not an oversight. Given the character of Brandom's project, the description cannot explicitly provide for informative purposes, on pain of presupposing a concept that already involves an idea of meaningfulness. If the Martians have only the deontic-structural description of the game, nothing in their understanding of it requires them to find that kind of cooperativeness in the communal playing of it. If they must see the practice as cooperative, it is only in that players need to care about making available to one another the intellectual pleasure that the Martians take to be the point of playing. This makes it doubtful that the description suffices to display moves as assertions, and (again, the other side of the coin) that it licenses seeing transitions between moves as inferences.

6. Besides the recommendation for inferentialism — to stay with the official label — that is supposed to lie in the unsatisfactoriness of representationalism, Brandom invokes some authorities.

Unsurprisingly, one is Sellars. Brandom (p. 102) cites a passage from "Inference and Meaning" in which Sellars recommends the strongest of six conceptions of "the status of material rules of inference" that he considers: "Material rules are as essential to meaning (and hence to language and thought) as formal rules, contributing to the architectural detail of its structure within the flying buttresses of logical form" (Sellars 1980: 265).

Now it is indeed plausible that a behavioral repertoire would not be meaningful at all — linguistic, expressive of thought — if it were not characterized by proprieties of non-formal inference. That is a natural reading of Sellars's thesis that material rules of inference are essential to meaning. But it would be quite another

matter to claim, with inferentialism, that an expression's meaning what it does *consists in* the fact that certain material-inferential proprieties govern its correct use, so that all semantic concepts, including that of an expression's meaning, can be explained in terms of no more than the concept of such proprieties. One can concede that there would be no meaning without material-inferential proprieties, while remaining sceptical that there need in general be any interesting answer to the question what it consists in that some expression means what it does.

It could not be correct to hear, say, "smoke", on someone's lips, as meaning *smoke* if her use of it did not conform to some suitable material-inferential proprieties. But no specific proprieties are essential to the word's meaning that. Certainly some may seem more central than others. If she does not think it right to derive an expectation she would express with "smoke" from the presence of fire, it might take ingenuity to interpret her word as nevertheless meaning *smoke*. But the interpretation might still be made to fit, by finding in her suitably unorthodox substantive beliefs about smoke. Their unorthodoxy would not by itself show that they could not have smoke as their topic. And similarly with any candidate for being a propriety essential to the word's meaning what it does. There need be no specific proprieties in which it can rightly be said to consist that "smoke" means what it does. The claim Brandom cites from Sellars is plausible, but it is simply wrong to think its plausibility is a recommendation for a general semantic inferentialism.[9]

7. More surprisingly, Brandom's authorities include the young Frege (pp. 94–97, 107–116). Brandom reads Frege's *Begriffsschrift* (1879)[10] as an inferentialist tract.

The reading gets off to an unpromising start. Brandom cites a passage from Dummett, which he interprets as deploring a shift in Frege's thinking, from an early semantic inferentialism to a later way of thinking that, in Brandom's words, "makes truth, rather than inference, primary in the order of semantic explanation" (pp. 96–97).[11] But what Dummett is deploring as retrograde, in the passage Brandom appeals to, is not a shift from an early inferentialist to a later representationalist period in Frege's thinking about semantic explanation, but a shift from pre-Fregean thinking about logic, which, rightly in Dummett's view, conceived logic as the study of logical consequence, to Frege's thinking, which — early no less than late — conceives logic as a science that arrives at a body of truths, of a quite special sort in that truth is not just the goal of this science, as of other sciences, but its object of study. Brandom can cite Dummett in support of reading the young Frege as a semantic inferentialist only by misreading Dummett.

There is certainly something right about taking the Frege of *Begriffsschrift* to be interested in making inferential proprieties explicit, on some interpretation of that idea. As against, say, Boole and Schröder, Frege prides himself on devising a notation that does not merely enable a codification of the forms of logical inference,

leaving content to be taken care of elsewhere. With Frege's conceptual notation, one is to be equipped to make contentful claims in a way that makes it clear exactly what one is committing oneself to. And of course that is a matter of what follows from one's claims, what inferences to consequential commitments they license.

But there is something amiss with taking this to signal an anticipation of Brandom's semantic inferentialism. That begins to come out in some remarks Brandom is constrained to make about Frege's conditional. In Brandom's picture, the conditional is a device for making explicit, in the form of claims, material-inferential proprieties that characterize a linguistic practice anyway, independently of the availability of a conditional locution, and determine the content of the concepts involved in the inferences they license. But Frege explains his conditional by saying it is to be denied only in the case in which the antecedent is to be affirmed and the consequent is to be denied.[12] Thus it would be correct to affirm the counterpart, in Frege's notation, of "If Hegel was Hölderlin's roommate, then 43 is prime" (Brandom's example, p. 113). As Brandom has to acknowledge, this makes Frege's conditional "an alarmingly bad choice for making explicit actual proprieties of inference" (ibid.). There would be nothing proper about inferring the consequent of that conditional from its antecedent, but the conditional is fine by Frege's lights.[13] Brandom says this "tend[s] to obscure the crucial expressive role in explicitating inferences (and therefore conceptual contents) that [Frege] assigns to" the conditional (p. 111). But Frege's conditional is so patently a bad instrument for the purpose Brandom says Frege assigns to it that charity recommends finding a different purpose for it. Frege is not blind to the peculiar features of his conditional. On the contrary, he parades them. It would be extraordinary if he intended the conditional for Brandom's purpose, making material goodnesses of inference explicit in the form of claims, and simply failed to see that his explanation allows correct uses of it that do no such thing.

In fact Frege's conditional, in combination with his notation for generality, is perfect, just as he explains it, for doing what he prides himself on making it possible to do, namely giving expression to complex contents in such a way as to make perspicuous what one is committed to in being committed to them. Frege's notation allows one to make explicit what one is committed to when one says, for instance, that a property is hereditary in a series, in such a way that the consequences that follow from the commitment can be derived in formally valid proofs, leaving no gaps needing to be bridged by intuition — a defect Frege famously complains of, in the inferential practice of mathematics conducted without his conceptual notation.[14]

The consequences that matter for Frege here are consequences he displays as following logically from contents expressed in the conceptual notation. All the

inferences in *Begriffsschrift* are formally valid. Indeed they are all of the same form, and Frege draws attention to that. What his conditional serves to make explicit is not, as in Brandom's picture, material proprieties of inference, in the sense of excellences of inference that can be brought within the scope of logic only by the suspect move of counting the inferences as enthymematic and supplying an extra premise. (See §8 below for more on this.) The explicitation Frege achieves consists in articulating the *premises* of certain inferences in such a way that their conclusions can be displayed as following from the premises *by logical reasoning*, needing no leaps of intuition or assumed further premises.

Brandom acknowledges, after a fashion, a point in this area (pp. 113–114). What it reflects, according to him, is that in *Begriffsschrift* Frege only partly executes the task he sets himself. The ultimate aim is "to use logical vocabulary to make explicit the inferential involvements in virtue of which *nonlogical* claims have the conceptual contents they do" (p. 113; my emphasis). Frege's ambitions for his conceptual notation extend outside the territory covered by his logicism, according to which logic accounts for not only the form but also the content of certain mathematical statements. But in *Begriffsschrift* Frege only gets as far as spelling out the inferential roles of "the logical concepts themselves, and those mathematical concepts that turn out to be definable from them" (ibid.). According to Brandom's suggestion, if Frege had gone beyond this "first stage of his grand project of clarification of nonlogical concepts through their explicitation in logical terms" (ibid.), and tried to apply his ideas in areas such as geometry and mechanics, where logic accounts only for form and not also — as he thinks it does in arithmetic — for content, he would have been forced to realize that his conditional is inappropriate for the general case of the expressive purpose he assigns to it.

Brandom here in effect admits that his own conception of the conditional, according to which it makes proprieties of material inference explicit in the form of claims, is at best off-stage in *Begriffsschrift*. But in fact there is no reason to suppose Brandom's conditional is even waiting in the wings. It is beside the point that the contents Frege explicitly treats in *Begriffsschrift* are limited to those that come within the scope of his logicism. What Frege achieves with his conceptual notation is, quite generally, a way of articulating logical structure in such a way that the consequences in virtue of which claims have the content they do can be formally derived from the claims as expressed in the new notation. As he says, this is achieved by ensuring that "the content is not just indicated but is constructed out of its constituents by means of the same logical signs as are used in the computation" (that is, in the formal derivation) (Frege 1979: 35). It is true that in the cases he considers in *Begriffsschrift* logic is supposed to account ultimately not only for the structure revealed by such an articulation of the content of a concept but also

for the constituents, to stay with that way of putting things. But the same expressive powers of the logical notation — including the conditional as Frege explains it — would enable him similarly to display the logical structure of contents whose constituents are definitely nonlogical, in such a way as to allow formal derivation of commitments consequential on committing oneself to those contents. And that is Frege's claim about the expressive utility of his conceptual notation, now formulated in a way that allows it to apply in other exact sciences besides those that come within the scope of his logicism. It is still, in this general case, a matter of articulating premises so as to reveal consequences as formally derivable from them, not of making explicit proprieties of inference governing inferences that are not formally valid at all.

Frege takes pride in the superiority of his conceptual notation to those of Boole and Schröder. They already have resources for laying open to view structures in the content of concepts with certain kinds of logical complexity. To take an obvious case: if we suppose being H is defined as being F or G, Boolean apparatus displays how the concept of being H is inferentially connected to the concept of being F and the concept of being G. But Frege provides resources for making explicit a different kind of concept formation, engaged in, with at best partial articulateness before his innovation, in mathematics and no doubt other exact sciences. Here the complex concepts do not merely exploit boundaries already drawn by the simpler concepts out of which they are formed, as in the cases that can be handled with Boolean resources (Frege 1979, 33–35). The novelty consists in the fact that Frege's apparatus makes it possible to do, in cases of this kind, what Boole and Schröder could already do in cases of the kind they could cope with — to make the content of logically complex concepts explicit by enabling formal derivations, from premises in which they figure, to conclusions involving only the simpler concepts from which those complex concepts are formed. As before, the only inferences that matter for making sense of Frege's pride in his innovation are formally valid inferences. There is no reason why he should interest himself at all in the material goodnesses of inference that figure at the foundation of Brandom's construal of semantics. In citing Frege as a precursor of his inferentialism, Brandom simply misreads the expressive purpose of Frege's conceptual notation.

8. It is a mistake to assimilate material goodness in inference to formal validity by insisting that those who engage in such inferences tacitly supply extra premises. Moves that display inferential rationality need not themselves be cases of logical reasoning. Brandom makes considerable fuss about rejecting this mistake, under the label "formalism" (pp. 97–102.[15]

Brandom's conception of logical vocabulary definitively precludes any tendency to fall into this mistake. According to Brandom, the point of logical vocabulary,

centrally the conditional, is to make explicit inferential proprieties that characterize a linguistic practice anyway, independently of its even containing logical vocabulary. So there could be a practice that was linguistic, in the demanding sense of being governed by norms including norms for inference, but that did not yet contain means for formulating inferences of a specifically logical kind. (See, e.g., p. 383: "There is nothing incoherent about a language or stage in the development of a language in which the only vocabulary in play is nonlogical".) Participants in such a practice would show rationality in their inferential behavior, but they would not yet be able to engage in logical reasoning.

I have been urging that Brandom has no basis for his claim that this conception of logical vocabulary is Frege's. In fact nothing in Frege's thinking tells against the thought that a practice could not be indicative of rationality at all, as it would need to be in order to be linguistic in that demanding sense, unless it already enabled its participants to engage in logical reasoning. On this view there could not be a language without logical vocabulary. A position on these lines would not have the firewall against "formalism" that Brandom's thinking supplies. But such a position is nevertheless perfectly compatible with recognizing that "formalism" is a mistake. (So the wrongness of "formalism" is no ground for rejecting it, as Brandom seems to suggest at p. 383.) The idea would be that nothing subjects do can count as inferring, even inferring whose excellence is material rather than formal, unless something they do — which can be something else — can be understood as inferring logically. The idea that there is no rationality without logic need not imply that all exercises of rationality are themselves cases of logical reasoning.

In a striking phrase, Brandom says "Logic is the organ of semantic self-consciousness" (p. xix). In his book, this slogan expresses an implication of the thesis I have been considering, that logical vocabulary enables prior inferential proprieties that determine the semantic properties of expressions to be made explicit in the form of claims. What connects this with self-consciousness is that only by being thus made explicit can the proprieties become subject to criticism and reasoned modification. Semantic self-consciousness requires the ability to contemplate, so to speak as objects, the determinants of the semantic properties of the expressions one uses, as opposed to merely living within the normative constraints they impose. And this stepping back from one's practice is achieved by making its norms explicit as claims, about which one can ask whether they are correct.

Now if we discard the idea that prior inferential proprieties determine the semantic properties of expressions, we can no longer embrace Brandom's slogan as he means it. But we can say logic is the organ of rational self-consciousness. We can say that an explicitly conditional locution is required if supposed inferential proprieties — features of the supposed topography of the space of reasons — are to be possible

objects of contemplation, so that the shape of a subject's supposed responsiveness to reasons can be an object for her, as it must be if her responses to reasons are to be self-conscious.[16] The picture diverges from Brandom's in that these inferential proprieties, these shapings of rationality, are no longer seen as constituting an independently available foundation for a semantic theory of a language.

This leaves untouched the thought — which is surely congenial to Brandom's basic outlook — that awareness of oneself as subject to semantic norms, in self-conscious participation in a discursive practice, is awareness of oneself as subject to rational requirements of a specific kind. Semantic self-consciousness is a case of rational self-consciousness. And now, combining that thought with the thought that logic is the organ of rational self-consciousness, we can recover an interpretation for Brandom's slogan, even without his semantic foundationalism. In this conception no less than in Brandom's, logic is the organ of semantic self-consciousness.

Given this reinterpretation of Brandom's slogan, the thought that a practice is not recognizable as linguistic unless it already contains logical vocabulary can be rephrased by saying there is no discursiveness, no genuine trafficking in meanings, without semantic self-consciousness. This stands in contrast with Brandom's picture, in which self-consciousness *überhaupt* is a late-coming extra (he undertakes to provide for it only in Chapter 8), not a necessary condition for a practice to be discursive, with its performances expressive of conceptual content. It is, to say the least, not obvious that this really respects the intuitive connection, which is fundamental to Brandom's thinking (see, e.g., pp. 1–3), between the idea of having one's life shaped by meaning and the idea of being responsive to reasons. Surely the responsiveness to reasons that figures in this connection should be responsiveness to reasons *as such*. Can that really be in place in the absence of the capacity to raise questions about whether what one finds oneself inclined to be swayed by, in forming a belief or deciding to act, really constitutes a reason for the belief or action one is contemplating? And that imports rational self-consciousness, and hence — by Brandom's own lights — command of logical vocabulary. There is something to be said for the view that logic, as the organ of rational and hence semantic self-consciousness, is more deeply implicated in the very idea of a distinctively conceptual kind of content than Brandom's story allows.

9. When I previously expressed doubts about how he undertakes to motivate inferentialism, Brandom's response (1997: 191) was to suggest that in the end it does not matter whether he succeeds in making inferentialism antecedently attractive. Even if the inferentialist project might not have seemed a good idea in advance, the proof is in the pudding.

That can easily sound reasonable. But it is really not clear how much pudding there is, if we discount the considerations that are supposed to recommend inferentialism in the first place.

Given the enormous size of Brandom's book, that may seem a crazy remark. But much in the second part of *Making it Explicit* depends essentially on the first. If we grant that propositional content — the objective purport of utterances of whole sentences — has been provided for in the first part, it is indeed plausible that the semantic properties of subsentential expressions, their contribution to the semantic properties of whole sentences, can be isolated by attending to substitutional inferences. (See, in particular, the pivotal Chapter 6.) But that is not a vindication of inferentialism unless the provision for propositional content that it assumes has itself been genuinely achieved by inferentialist means. The conception according to which the meanings of subsentential expressions are what they contribute to the meanings of whole sentences is in itself neutral. (It is fundamental to the thinking of the mature Frege.) So a great deal of weight rests on the first part of the book.

Now I have already (§5 above) sketched a scepticism about the claim that a description of a behavioral repertoire in the deontic-structural terms Brandom elaborates would suffice to display its moves as including assertions. To repeat a crucial point, the label "inferentialism" must not be allowed to confuse the issue here. If the concept of inference is on a level with the concept of assertion, as Brandom seems to say it is (p. 158), we cannot presuppose that the transitions between moves in a practice so described are inferences, on pain of begging the question whether the construction has really provided for a role for the concept of assertion.

In a part of Chapter 2 I have not yet considered, Brandom offers possible ingredients for an inferentialist pudding taken from the work of a third authority, Dummett (pp. 116–132). Dummett draws attention to explanations of logical constants in terms of introduction and elimination rules, that is, specifications of canonical forms of inference in which the constants figure in the conclusions and premises respectively. He proposes to generalize this. He suggests we can explain the meanings of other sorts of expressions in terms of circumstances that license using them and consequences of the commitments undertaken in such uses. The star illustration of this is the case of pejorative terms such as "Boche". It is indeed plausible that the expressive work "Boche" does for those who use it can be captured in terms of an inference from someone's being German to that person's being barbarously cruel, or something on those lines. Someone who calls Kurt "a Boche" aims to convey that he is German — the circumstances of application — and *therefore* barbarously cruel — the supposed consequence.

Now the case of logical constants is of course fine, but quite special. It is not a distinctively inferentialist thought that the very essence of logic lies in certain inferences. Someone who is doubtful about the general credentials of inferentialism can acknowledge that the meanings of the vocabulary that is special to logic can be captured in terms of inferences, and refuse the invitation to generalize.

For different reasons, words like "Boche" are special too. Why should we suppose the significance of predicative expressions in general — let alone expressions of other kinds — can be modelled on the expressive role of ethnic or racial slurs? As I acknowledged before (§6), it is plausible that predicative (or any) expressions would not mean what they do if their use were not subject to suitable inferential proprieties. But that is not to say their meaning what they do can be exhaustively explained in inferential terms. It is peculiar to terms like "Boche" that their expressive role can be captured by a paraphrase that includes an occurrence of "therefore".

Inferentialism is nothing if not a general thesis. That semantic insights can be achieved in this or that particular area by focusing on inferences does not vindicate inferentialism. It is compatible with the view that semantic concepts come in a package, each intelligible partly in terms of the others, rather than conforming to the foundational structure that inferentialism envisages. Brandom's talk of the proof being in the pudding would be to the point if he had actually given a semantic account of a language in inferentialist terms. But what he has given is really only an advertisement for such a thing. The question whether his proffered motivation is convincing matters more than he acknowledges.

Notes

1. Page references otherwise unexplained will be to Brandom (1994). This paper is a descendant of material I presented to a joint seminar with Brandom in 1998. I am grateful to him for the continuing stimulus of his work, and for much helpful discussion.

2. Brandom's presentation leaves it unclear whether predicates are supposed to be independently treated, and I have paraphrased so as to leave that open.

3. See, e.g., Brandom (p. 94) on "the contemporary way of working out the representationalist order of explanation" as starting with "an independent notion of relations of reference or denotation obtaining between mental or linguistic items and objects and sets of objects in the largely nonmental, nonlinguistic environment".

4. Brandom suggests that Hegel took the incipient inferentialism Brandom finds in Kant to its logical conclusion: "It remained for Hegel, however, to complete the inversion of the traditional order of semantic explanation …" (p. 92). But it seems off-key to read Hegel as having any sympathy with an idea of conceptual primitives. Inferentialism shares with representationalism a

linear style of conceptual clarification, starting with something supposedly independently understood. That is surely not a Hegelian way of proceeding.

5. Perhaps we should look for examples in contemporary philosophy. But where? We cannot attribute a representationalist orientation on the basis of the order in a formal presentation of a semantic theory. It is true, for instance, that a Davidsonian semantic theory of a language would begin with assignments of semantic properties to subsentential expressions. But that is perfectly consistent with endorsing a Kantian priority of the propositional. Davidson makes that clear; see Davidson (1973). And attributing priority to the propositional reflects the thought, which shapes Davidson's thinking about interpretation, that a semantic theory for a natural language would ultimately stand or fall according to whether it made rational sense of speakers. (Among much else, inference would matter for this.) Davidson is certainly not a proponent of Brandom's "representationalist order of explanation". Brandom describes Davidson as conceiving "representational relations as holding in the first instance between propositionally contentful intentional states and facts or states of affairs" (p. 337). This at least acknowledges that Davidson has the Kantian priority of the propositional, though it grossly misrepresents Davidson's thinking, which makes no such play with facts or states of affairs. And the picture Brandom gives in this later passage is still that "most representationalists", unlike Davidson, think they can begin with independently intelligible relations between subsentential expressions and things in the real order. One wonders whom he has in mind.

6. Brandom actually acknowledges something like this point (p. 669, n. 10). But he relegates the acknowledgement to an endnote whose text indication comes late in the chapter (p. 135). It makes no difference to how the main body of the chapter proceeds.

7. Brandom (1997: 190, n. 1) rephrases my suggestion that "snow" and snow are so related that concatenating the former with "… is white" yields a truth just in case snow is white, by including a relation between "… is white" and being white. Contrary to what Brandom implies, this is not an improvement; there is no need for a real thing (or, as Sellars might say, non-thing) to stand to "… is white" in an analogue to the relation in which snow stands to "snow". I conjecture that the reason Brandom thinks it is an improvement to add relations between predicates and properties is that he wants the representational relations that are to be brought on to the scene at the end of his progression to match the representational relations with which his designational representationalists are described as thinking they can begin.

8. Even leaving representation out of account for the moment, I do not see how to make the second of these remarks from p. 158 consistent with the implied claim of Chapter 2 that the concept of inference is primitive with respect to concepts that presuppose the idea of the semantic (see, e.g., p. 89).

9. Sellars takes himself to have recommended the thesis that "material transformation rules determine the descriptive meaning of the expressions of a language" (Sellars 1980: 284, cited by Brandom at p. 103). But he gives no good reason to accept anything stronger than that expressions could not mean what they do if they were not caught up in some suitable material-inferential proprieties. That can be accepted by someone who does not believe that the idea of inferential proprieties — or, to accommodate the possibility I considered in §5, proprieties of transition between commitments and entitlements — is primitive in the order of semantic explanation.

10. I shall use "*Begriffsschrift*" for this book, and "conceptual notation" for the "formula language" it proposes.

11. Brandom is citing Dummett (1973: 432–433).

12. In *Begriffsschrift* the conditional is explained on these lines, rather than in terms that amount directly to the familiar truth-table, as in Frege's later presentations. (What Frege actually says is that the conditional is denied only if the antecedent is affirmed and the consequent denied. But this would be strictly true only of someone who never used the conditional incorrectly. My rewriting in the gerundive form seems appropriate.) Brandom tries to connect the move from the earlier to the later style of explanation with the shift he misreads Dummett as complaining of (p. 111). But it is surely clear that the difference of presentation is not significant.

13. Brandom suggests the point turns on the fact that Frege's conditional is two-valued. But a many-valued conditional, incorrectly affirmed only if the antecedent has a designated value and the consequent an undesignated one, would surely be just as bad by Brandom's lights. Adding more truth-values would not ensure an inferentially relevant connection between antecedent and consequent.

14. For an extended example of such a derivation, see Frege (1979: 27–32).

15. He makes the point in large part by way of a massively uncharitable reading of a passage from Dennett. But the point is certainly right, and I shall not quibble with the details of his presentation of it.

16. Frege's conditional will serve in this inquiry, to the extent that if the answer to the question "Is it true?" asked about a Fregean conditional is "No", the associated inferential practice is revealed as needing critical attention. Of course we had better not suppose that if the answer is "Yes", that suffices for a supposed inferential propriety to pass muster.

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Pragmatics, Pittsburgh style

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I give a rough outline of Brandom's scorekeeping account of conceptual content. The account is meant to be phenomenalist, normativist, expressively complete and non-circular; the question is how and to what extent it succeeds in meeting these goals.

Keywords: conceptual content, deontic statuses, doxastic commitment, institution, normativism, objectivity, perspectivity, phenomenalism, reductionism.

Robert Brandom's (1994) *Making it Explicit* aims to provide a comprehensive and unified account of mind and language by specifying the structure which a set of practices must exhibit in order (i) to confer objective *conceptual* content on various performances, and (ii) for it to be the case that the individuals involved in those practices thereby count as rational beings (i.e., as beings capable of conceptual thought). The project is realized in roughly two stages. First, a *normative* pragmatics is provided, wherein the speech act of assertion and the (propositional) content of both assertions and beliefs are explained in overtly normative terms; this basic account is then extended to sub-sentential constituents such as singular terms, predicates, logical operators, semantic vocabulary ("true" and "refer"), normative terms, and the vocabulary of propositional attitude ascriptions. I won't have much to say about this second, strictly semantic part here, except insofar as it bears on the overall structure of the explanatory project. In the next section, I will identify some of the main constraints which Brandom sees as governing his enterprise and give a very rough sketch of his scorekeeping account of conceptual content. I will then express, in the remaining sections, a number of worries about how and to what extent it succeeds in meeting the constraints that have been singled out. I will tentatively suggest, in the end, that his views may be best understood as implying that there is no room for anything like a strictly empirical knowledge of thought or meaning.

1. The constraints I am going to mention are not exhaustive, but, in my opinion (and I think in Brandom's opinion as well), they are the most important and give Brandom's approach its very distinctive flavor. The first constraint is that a good account of conceptual content should explain how it emerges from certain kinds of practices; to endorse this constraint is to embrace a form of pragmatism, which Brandom calls *phenomenalism*. The second constraint is that the account should make essential use of irreducibly normative terms; this is a commitment to a form of *normativism*. The third is that it should be expressively complete, in the sense of including an account of the conceptual resources that are needed in order to formulate this very account of conceptual content. A further general constraint, which goes almost without saying, is that the account should not rely on (unexplained) semantic or intentional vocabulary. These constraints interact in various ways and at various stages in the deployment of Brandom's general doctrines, some of which I will be trying to sort out in what follows. But it can perhaps already be discerned that there is at least a tension between the pragmatist and the normativist constraints, and my suggestion will be that some of the most puzzling features of Brandom's analyses come from his attempt to simultaneously satisfy both of them. The tension comes from the fact that while the normativist constraint requires that content be explained in irreducibly normative terms, the pragmatist constraint seems to require that content be explained in terms of what people actually do, which suggests that norms should somehow be reducible to practices.

According to normativism, there must be norms which are constitutive of conceptual contents; and according to Brandom's version of pragmatism, these norms must be implicitly instituted by (social) practice, and thus depend on the capacity of the individuals involved to take normative (but implicit) attitudes towards certain performances. These two ideas are combined with the intuition that the notion of propositional content is, most fundamentally, that of something which is involved in inferences as premise or conclusion, and which is thus inferentially articulated, to yield the general view that the norms that are constitutive of discursive practice and conceptual content are those that implicitly govern the (Sellarsian, inferential) "game" of giving and asking for reasons.

In Brandom's view, a large class (perhaps the whole class) of implicitly normative social practices involve a basic distinction between two sorts of deontic statuses that the individuals taking part in these practices may have, namely, *commitment* and *entitlement*. Individuals may be committed or entitled to do certain things. These are normative statuses insofar as it is *appropriate* or *correct* for someone to do what he is committed or entitled to do, and *inappropriate* or *incorrect* for him *not* to do what he is committed to do, or to do what he is *not* entitled to do. These practices are conceived as games in which each participant enjoys various

deontic statuses, and each significant move alters the deontic statuses of the participants. Now, according to Brandom's story, such deontic statuses exist only insofar as they are mutually attributed to each other by the various participants, which is to say that attributing and undertaking deontic statuses (keeping deontic score, in Brandom's phrase) are essential parts of what is involved in playing such games (though it doesn't seem that taking these attitudes is supposed to count as *making a move* in the game). I'll return later to the important and vexing question of what the exact relation is supposed to be between these deontic statuses and the corresponding practical (implicit) attitudes (of attributing and undertaking deontic statuses); for now, it will suffice to say that appealing to some such attitudes seems to be dictated by the assumption that conceptual norms must somehow be grounded in the practice of the very individuals they govern.

Specifically *discursive* practice, in this scheme, is seen as a special kind of implicitly normative social practice in which the fundamental moves are inferentially articulated and thus endowed with specifically conceptual content. Accordingly, for a practice to count as discursive, there must be some performances that count as giving reasons. But if there are performances with that status, then there must also be performances *for which* reasons can be given. Not all performances for which reasons can be given must be taken as assertions, but to give a reason is certainly to make a claim (an assertion), and to do something for which a reason can be given. Assertions can thus plausibly be singled out as the only kind of performances which *both* can be given as reasons and are in need of reasons (Brandom 1994: 167).

If to make a move in the game of giving reasons is to be seen as altering the players' deontic statuses, it must be because making such a move, i.e. making an assertion, involves in a certain sense the addition (or subtraction) of certain commitments (or entitlements) for the different participants, the speaker and the audience. Asserting comes to be seen as being (in part) the undertaking of a special kind of commitment, one that has characteristic effects on the deontic statuses of the participants.

Insofar as beliefs are essentially the kinds of things that can be expressed in assertions, they consist of the same kinds of commitments as are undertaken in assertions. It seems therefore apt to speak interchangeably of "doxastic" or "assertional" commitments, and to hold that to explain such commitments and how they come to have inferential force would account at once for both linguistic and mental conceptual content. On this view, the main difference between assertions and beliefs is this: to believe that p is to *have* a certain commitment, while to assert that p is to *undertake* that same commitment. More precisely, asserting is a way of *directly* undertaking or openly *acknowledging* a certain commitment. But since the

same commitments can also be indirectly or consequentially undertaken, without the agent being necessarily disposed to (openly) acknowledge them, there is no danger that this way of construing beliefs as doxastic or assertional commitments would imply that one has a belief only if one is disposed to avow it in assertion. Among the doxastic commitments of a given individual, there are some he has avowed in assertions, some he is disposed to avow (these two classes together form what Brandom (1994: 194) calls "acknowledged" commitments), and some he is not disposed to avow.

On Brandom's account, both the content of one's assertion, and its having the force of an assertion, are a matter of its inferential significance in some suitably (*inter alia*, socially) extended sense, which is to say that they are a matter of further commitments and entitlements (on the part of both the speaker and the audience) that follow from it *and* from which it (or an entitlement to it) follows. In other words, a given performance counts as an assertion in virtue of the fact that its inferential significance exhibits a certain characteristic pattern, and it counts as having a given propositional content in virtue of its specific inferential relations to other possible assertions. Brandom's general approach is thus basically functionalist. Like other forms of functionalism, it tries to characterize assertions and their contents in terms of the relations that they bear to further things *of the same kind*. On such a view, to be an assertion is just to be a performance of a kind which is characterized by the fact that performances of that kind are related to each other in a certain way; and to be an assertion that *p* (rather than that *q*) is to be related to other specific assertions in specific ways. On this kind of holistic approach, one cannot, *in practice*, explain what assertions and their contents consist in without using these very notions, i.e. without making reference to further assertions and contents. In other words, any practice in which performances are interrelated in the right kind of way (i.e. any practice exhibiting the right kind of structure) will count as a discursive practice.

In Brandom's view, the two basic kinds of deontic statuses, namely commitment and entitlement, must be involved in a correct account of assertion. To assert that *p*, is, in a first approximation, to acknowledge a commitment to (the effect that) *p*; but such a commitment is always one to which one may or may not be entitled or for which reasons may be asked. This interplay of commitment and entitlement stands in the center of Brandom's account of assertion and inferential articulation.

Inferential relations are first thought of in terms of inheritance (and exclusion) relations among deontic statuses, that is, commitments and entitlements.[1] Obviously (in the context of other commitments and/or entitlements), being committed to *q* may follow from being committed to *p*, being entitled to *q* may follow

from the fact that one is (committed and) entitled to *p*, and one's being entitled (to commitment) to q may be precluded by the fact that one is committed to *p*. This gives rise to three varieties of inferential relations which contribute to determine inferential articulation. But since inferential articulation is construed in terms of inheritance of deontic statuses, and since one's deontic statuses can, in principle, be inherited from those of others, it is tempting to extend the notion of inferential relation to cover certain kinds of interpersonal relations (thus introducing a social dimension). In particular, the fact that one may inherit one's entitlement to *p* from the fact that someone else is entitled to *p* may then come to be seen as an inferential relation, or at least as one aspect of inferential articulation which contributes to determine the special kind of commitment that assertion consists in.

What distinguishes the kind of commitment undertaken by asserting that *p*, and makes it a *doxastic* commitment, is, according to the attractive story in Brandom (1994: 173–174), that acknowledging such a commitment amounts (in the practice of the community) to (i) entitling others to undertake the same commitment (and its consequential commitments), eventually by reasserting the same content, and to (ii) committing oneself to demonstrating one's entitlement to this commitment, should it be questioned. In other words, the practice of assertion essentially involves the undertaking of deontic statuses manifesting some specific combination of authority and responsibility. Asserting that *p* consists, in part, in accepting the responsibility of establishing that one is entitled to this commitment (eventually by making further assertions, i.e., undertaking further commitments of the same kind), and in part in giving one's authority for the claim that *p*, in the sense that it licenses others (a) to commit themselves to *p* or to any of its (commitment-preserving) consequences, and (b) to discharge their own responsibility for demonstrating their entitlement to these claims by deferring to the original speaker. What further assertions one can make in order to show that one is entitled to *p*, and what further assertions one becomes committed or entitled to (or is precluded from being entitled to) as a consequence of being committed to *p*, together determine the specific content to which the speaker commits himself in asserting that *p* (the specific commitment such that his acknowledging it constitutes his asserting that *p*).

It can now easily be seen how making an assertion is to make a move in the game of giving and asking for reasons, and how making such a move may consist in altering the deontic statuses of the participants. At each stage in a verbal exchange, each interlocutor has certain doxastic commitments and entitlements to such commitments which together determine his (discursive) deontic score. The assertion that *p* can then be seen to correspond to a function from the deontic scores characterizing one stage of a verbal exchange to the deontic scores

characterizing the next stage (i.e., the stage that results from making the assertion that *p*). At least this is how things look when deontic statuses and their inferential relations are taken for granted or presupposed as objectively determined. It will perhaps be conceded that if an account along these lines can be made to work, then, (conceptual) content could be explained in (partly) normative terms. However, such an account (no matter how extensively worked out) looks suspicious as long as nothing is said concerning how such statuses and inferential relations arise out of, or are instituted by, the practices of the individuals to whom the capacity for discursive thought has been attributed (by us). This is, of course, the hard part of the story, as Brandom is very much aware; but it has less to do with how one is going to explain conceptual content in normative terms as with how one is going to account for the relevant norms in the first place. Without such an account, the normative view would not have any obvious advantage over more traditional, 'platonic' views.

A leading intuition behind Brandom's attitude towards matters of meaning and content is that an expression can mean anything only insofar as it is (or can be) *taken* to mean it. In Brandom's favored words, this becomes the view that what one is committed or entitled to, and hence what it is appropriate or inappropriate for one to do or not to do, depends on what one is *taken* to be committed or entitled to. This intuition, however, is counterbalanced by the opposite intuition that one may *objectively* be committed or entitled to something, even when one is not taken to be so committed or entitled by anyone (and conversely, that one may objectively not be committed or entitled to what everyone, including oneself, takes one to be committed or entitled). The challenge is thus to provide a constructive account of norms that is yet capable of sustaining a real distinction between being correct or appropriate and being treated as correct or appropriate (by anyone, including the community as a whole). Brandom claims to have taken up this challenge and shown how these two conflicting intuitions can be reconciled and how social practices of a certain kind can *institute* objective norms and *confer* objective conceptual contents on expressions and performances. As Brandom (1994: xviii) puts it in his preface:

> A fundamental methodological criterion of adequacy of the account [to be propounded here] is that the theorist does not attach semantic contents to expressions by *stipulation*; it must always be shown how such contents can be *conferred* on expressions by the scorekeeping activities the theorist attributes to the linguistic practitioners themselves. That is, the aim is to present conditions on an interpretation of a community as discursive scorekeepers that are sufficient (though perhaps not necessary) to ensure that interpreting the community as engaged in *those* implicitly normative practices *is* interpreting them as taking or treating their speech acts as expressing the sorts of semantic contents in question.[2]

Brandom intends, so it seems, to specify a set of conditions such that, if a community would engage in practices meeting these conditions, its members would thereby take some of their performances as having content and these performances would thereby have been endowed with content. But this raises two questions: (i) what must a *practice* look like for its practitioners to count as taking or treating something as having content, and (ii) how is the fact that something is *taken* (in practice) to have content supposed to make it the case that it *has* content (in some more robust sense)? How is the fact that some people take each other to have various deontic statuses supposed to make it the case that they *do* have such statuses, and may have them even when they are not taken to have them by anyone? There is no simple answer to these questions in Brandom's (1994) book.

2. As Brandom strongly emphasizes,[3] for a normative account of conceptual content to avoid regress or circularity, the correctness of a performance cannot depend on its being *judged or conceived* to be correct or incorrect. This follows from the obvious fact that to judge or conceive something is to do something conceptually contentful. But since the propriety of a performance must nonetheless depend somehow on the activities of those who produce and consume it, it must be possible to explain what it is to take a performance to be correct or incorrect, or to "practically" attribute a deontic status, in a way that doesn't equate it with any *conceptually contentful* state or attitude (or more generally, in such a way that the capacity to take a performance to be correct or incorrect or to attribute a deontic status doesn't presuppose any capacity for conceptual thought). The problem is that there seems to be no obviously coherent way of meeting this demand.

Denying that practical deontic attitudes are conceptually contentful leaves only two options: either they are intentional but non-conceptually contentful, or they are not intentional at all. But neither option is very appealing. Although Brandom (e.g. 1994: xiii) sometimes gives the impression that the practical deontic attitudes that are supposed to "institute" deontic statuses (and thus inferential roles) must be taken as non-intentional at all, this sharply conflicts with the overt grammar of such relevant locutions as "treating *X* as committed to…" or "taking *X* to be committed to …",[4] and with the way in which Brandom himself uses these locutions.

For reasons which I have expounded elsewhere (Laurier 2001), I don't think that there is any general objection to appealing to non-conceptual content in an account of conceptual content. And for a while, I have been convinced that the best way for Brandom to avoid circularity is to grant that the relevant practical deontic attitudes are in fact non-conceptually contentful. But I now think that this course is not open to Brandom and that he himself provides all that is needed to show that these attitudes must (on his view) actually be conceptually contentful, thus flouting the non-circularity constraint.

In order to show how this happens, I must evoke another key feature of Brandom's account, namely the fact that it induces a distinction between two kinds of conceptual thinkers: those who are "merely rational" and those who are "fully logical" — a distinction which rests, in turn, on Brandom's expressive conception of logic, according to which an expression counts as a piece of logical vocabulary when its role is to make some aspects of the semantic or pragmatic significance of contentful performances explicit. By this criterion the conditional counts as a (semantically) logical expression in virtue of the fact that it permits one to make claims about the inferential relations that are supposed to obtain between certain claims (which are already expressible). Thus, all expressions which are used to talk about either discursive deontic statuses or practical deontic attitudes, likewise count as (pragmatically) logical expressions. The introduction of such expressions into our language is needed in order to ensure the expressive completeness of the (proposed) theory of content; but it is otherwise "optional" in the sense that a practice of making contentful (inferentially articulated) performances could exist in a community which otherwise would lack any means of talking about the semantic or pragmatic significance of its own practice. This would be what I referred to above as a community of merely rational, but not fully logical, conceptual thinkers. It is characteristic of such thinkers that they can practically attribute discursive deontic statuses to each other; they thus have the capacity to undertake and attribute doxastic commitments — but only insofar as these commitments do *not* concern either practical deontic attitudes or discursive deontic statuses. In other words, they don't have the resources to commit themselves to claims with such contents as *that* someone practically attributes a certain deontic status to someone else (or to oneself), or *that* someone is doxastically committed or entitled to this or that claim. This is tantamount to saying that one could, in principle, have the capacity to have conceptual thoughts (doxastic commitments) without possessing the concept of a conceptual thought, or for that matter, without possessing the concept of practically attributing a discursive deontic status or the concepts of (discursive) commitment or entitlement.

This is in sharp contrast with Davidson's well known view (see especially Davidson 2001) that one can have no conceptual thought at all, unless one possesses the concept of belief.[5] I will argue below that this most welcome feature of Brandom's theory of content is actually threatened by his account of the objectivity of deontic statuses and conceptual contents. But for now, the trouble comes from the requirement of expressive completeness itself. For as it should be easy to see, an account such as Brandom's can be expressively complete only if it is circular! Expressive completeness requires that it be possible to *say*, i.e., to express explicitly, that someone practically attributes a given discursive deontic status, for example,

that someone attributes a doxastic commitment to it's being the case that *p*. But if what is thus said is conceptually contentful (as it should be) and truly reports what one is doing when one practically attributes a given doxastic commitment, then practical attributions must themselves be conceptually contentful. For what is practically attributed must then be the same as what is (truly) *said* to be practically attributed. It follows that if the proposed account of content is expressively complete, it is circular — since the practical deontic attitudes must then be conceptually contentful.

There actually seems to be a more direct way to come to the conclusion that practical deontic attitudes must be conceptually contentful on Brandom's view. For it should be obvious that, if what one practically attributes when one takes someone to be doxastically committed to *p*, really is a doxastic commitment, then it must itself be conceptually articulated, if doxastic commitments are. It would seem to follow that if Brandom's account of content really rests on the idea that content is conferred on performances in virtue of the fact that people take practical deontic attitudes toward each other, then it is either circular, or seriously incomplete.[6] Furthermore, the fact that the basic practical deontic attitudes must be taken as conceptually contentful (if it is indeed a fact) would also threaten Brandom's claim that the contents of both mental states and linguistic performances are simultaneously constituted in practice.

Since it is hard to believe that Brandom is not aware that his account has these features, I think this should be taken as evidence that he doesn't endorse the non-circularity constraint, at least if it is taken as implying that an acceptable account of intentional content should be given in exclusively *non-intentional* terms. But then the problem is to find out what kind of explanation of content he claims to be giving. Perhaps his purpose is not at all explanatory. In order to show that this is indeed the case, I point out two other puzzling features of Brandom's account.

3. Brandom insists repeatedly on the phenomenalist claim that *objective* discursive deontic statuses and conceptual contents are to be understood as arising from, or being *instituted* by, the discursive scorekeeping practice of attributing and acknowledging such statuses and contents. Here is a rough sketch of how this is supposed to be accomplished.

It is first granted that several individuals may have the capacity to practically attribute discursive commitments and entitlements to each other, and to (practically) acknowledge discursive commitments and entitlements by means of various performances. But attributing doxastic commitments always involves attributing further doxastic commitments and entitlements to such commitments that are (taken to be) inferentially linked to it, and these consequential deontic statuses depend on the collateral commitments endorsed by each individual. In other words,

which further commitments and entitlements are taken to result consequentially from a given commitment depends on which further doxastic and inferential commitments (i.e., commitments as to what follows from what) are endorsed. Since attributor and attributee will normally differ on this count (i.e., as to the collateral doxastic and inferential commitments they respectively endorse), this raises the question which consequential deontic statuses are relevant in any given case, those endorsed by the attributor or those endorsed by the attributee? From the perspective of any given attributor, this is the question whether, in specifying the content of the attributee's commitment, he should take account of the context provided by the other commitments he *acknowledges* himself or of the context provided by the other commitments (he takes to be) acknowledged by the attributee. Brandom accordingly takes this to yield a distinction, corresponding to the traditional distinction between *de re* and *de dicto* attributions of intentional contents, between what the attributee is "really" committed to (according to the given attributor) and what the attributee takes himself to be committed to (according to the same attributor). Here is a relevant quote from Brandom (1994: 597):

> From the point of view of each scorekeeper, there is for every other interlocutor a distinction between what commitments that individual *acknowledges* and what that individual is really committed to — between (immediate) deontic attitudes and deontic status (or consequentially expanded attitudes). But how this line is drawn in particular varies from scorekeeper to scorekeeper. This perspectival structure is what has been implicitly appealed to throughout by talk of the *institution* of deontic statuses by deontic attitudes.

Crucial to Brandom's account (in Chapter 8 of *Making it Explicit*) of such institution of deontic statuses is the idea that the distinction between deontic statuses and deontic attitudes ultimately boils down to a distinction between *mediate* and *immediate* deontic attitudes, which is itself to be explained in terms of the "perspectival" opposition between attributing and acknowledging (i.e., attributing to oneself) deontic statuses (Brandom 1994: 592–601).

One puzzling feature of Brandom's account lies in the fact that his explanation of the objective dimension of conceptual contents and deontic statuses heavily relies on a description of what he calls the *explicitating* role of the *ascribing* locutions, i.e., locutions such as "*S* believes that…" or "*S* is committed to the claim that…", which are used to *ascribe* (or make *explicit* attributions of) discursive commitments to others. What makes this puzzling is the fact that expressive or explicitating locutions (the paradigms of which are the logical operators) such as the ascribing locutions are supposed to be *optional*, in the sense that it must be possible for the members of a community to count as having *conceptually* contentful states and discursive commitments (i.e., as being "merely" rational) even *before*

such locutions have become available to them and have been conferred a role in their discursive practices. And this would seem to require that both the objective dimension of conceptual content and the institution of discursive deontic statuses must be independent of the availability of such locutions. It is therefore surprising that Brandom (1994: 499) should remark that

> once the expressive resources [ascriptional claims] provide are available, it becomes possible to do what one could not do without them — to attribute not just statuses but attitudes. Only by considering what ascriptional locutions express is it possible to understand the relation between the *status of being* committed and the *attitude of acknowledging* a commitment […] Thus [the ascribing vocabulary] not only makes it possible to *say* things one could not *say* before but makes it possible to *do* things one could not *do* before, *by* saying those things.

Brandom here clearly says that, prior to the availability of the ascribing locutions (i.e., of indirect discourse), no one could have the capacity to attribute *attitudes* to anyone;[7] and given the context of this remark, this is naturally understood as meaning that prior to the availability of the ascribing locutions in one's community (and thus prior to the possibility of ascribing attitudes), no one has the capacity to *practically attribute* any practical deontic attitude to anyone. Not only does this seem to conflict with Brandom's claim that the ascribing locutions have a purely expressive, explicitating role, but it implies that it must be possible to account for the institution of objective deontic statuses and conceptual contents in terms of practical deontic attitudes of "merely rational" agents without assuming that they have the capacity to have "higher-order" practical attitudes (i.e., the capacity to practically attribute practical attitudes). Given the claim that the relation between the deontic status of being committed and the practical attitude of acknowledging commitment can properly be understood *only by considering what ascriptional locutions express*, it follows that "merely rational" agents could not understand the proper relation between statuses and attitudes, since they must lack the capacity to (practically) attribute practical attitudes such as acknowledgements.

This raises a problem only on the assumption that "merely rational" agents cannot succeed in instituting deontic statuses and conceptual contents by their practices unless they understand this relation, or unless they have at least the capacity to practically attribute acknowledgements and attributions. But Brandom's account *does* seem to require them to have this capacity. For it requires that each individual involved in some discursive practice be able to make (*in practice*, since *ex hypothesis* no ascriptional locution is yet available) a distinction between what he takes someone else to be committed to and what this someone takes himself to be committed to, that is to say, between the commitments he attributes to someone and the commitments he takes to be *acknowledged* by this someone. If this is right,

then it looks as if Brandom would have to give up either the claim that ascriptional locutions are optional and that there may be "merely rational" agents, or his account of what the institution of deontic statuses and objective conceptual contents consists in (or at least that part of his account which calls for rejection of the idea that merely rational agents are capable of higher-order practical attitudes). If practical deontic attitudes turned out to be conceptually contentful (as I have suggested above), then the claim that no one could have higher-order practical attitudes without possessing the concepts of attribution and acknowledgement would appear to be mandatory. One would then have to deny that there could be merely rational but not fully logical creatures, or else find an account of the institution of deontic statuses and conceptual contents, which does not depend on the capacity for higher-order practical attitudes.[8]

However that may be, the fact remains that, as it stands, Brandom's official account of the institution of objective deontic statuses does rely on the availability of ascriptional locutions. And the same kind of account could be given of how the practices of "merely" rational agents can institute objective deontic statuses only on the assumption that they have the capacity to practically attribute practical attitudes. So let us now assume that the ascriptional locutions have been introduced, or at least that the individuals we are dealing with do have the capacity to have the corresponding higher-order practical attitudes, and ask how the social-perspectival structure of practical deontic attitudes is supposed to make sense of the distinction between mediate and immediate attitudes, and of the suggestion that deontic *statuses* are to be equated with mediate deontic (discursive) *attitudes*.

Suppose someone assertively utters some such ascriptional sentence as "*S* believes that *p*". By doing so, the speaker ascribes (and attributes) to *S* a doxastic commitment to *p*, but he also expresses, and acknowledges, his own *doxastic commitment* to *S*'s being doxastically committed to *p*. And in specifying the doxastic commitment he is ascribing to *S*, the speaker may use some words whose links to *S*'s original words (or to the words S would be disposed to use in acknowledging his commitment to p) depend on (doxastic or inferential) collateral commitments which he acknowledges, but which he doesn't take *S* to acknowledge (whether or not *S* would in fact acknowledge them). When this happens (we are told), then the ascription is (at least in some respect) *de re*. It is *de dicto* when the speaker relies only on (doxastic or inferential) collateral commitments which he takes *S* to acknowledge. For example, if *S* uttered the words "The man with the brown hat is a spy", and the speaker said "*S* believes that his neighbor is a spy", the resulting ascription would be *de re* if the speaker doesn't assume either

i. that *S* would acknowledge that the man with the brown hat is his neighbor or

ii. that *S* would acknowledge that if the man with the brown hat is his neighbor and the man with the brown hat is a spy, then his neighbor is a spy;

and it would be *de dicto* otherwise.[9]

This clearly provides us with sufficient conditions for an ascription to count as *de re* or *de dicto*. But, assuming that an ascription is *de dicto* only if it is not *de re*, we get the following necessary and sufficient conditions: an ascription is *de re* if and only if the ascriber relies on collateral commitments which he doesn't take the ascribee to acknowledge, and *de dicto* if and only if he doesn't rely on any such collateral commitments. It should furthermore be observed that (when put in these terms) this contrast need not be restricted to ascriptions but could also be made for practical attributions.

The foregoing is meant to provide (the beginning of) an explanation of the contrast between *de re* and *de dicto* ascriptions/attributions (of doxastic commitments), which relies only on a social-perspectival contrast between acknowledging and attributing (acknowledgements of) doxastic or inferential commitments. The significance of this explanation for Brandom's project lies in the fact that, on his view, it is by making *de re* ascriptions (with the help of such locutions as "of" and "about") that the representational, objective, dimension of content is made explicit. In other words, *de re* ascriptions make it explicit that (the ascriber takes it that) the correctness of doxastic commitments depends (at least in part) on the way things are, and not only on how they are taken to be (by the one to whom these commitments are ascribed, or by anyone), thus expressing (one aspect of) the objectivity of conceptual content.

As Brandom emphasizes, the perspectival character of content specifications rests on a prior perspectival relation between deontic statuses and deontic attitudes, insofar as "deontic statuses are *instituted* by the same essentially social scorekeeping practice of adopting discursive deontic attitudes that *confers* conceptual content on them" (Brandom 1994: 593). More precisely, both the objectivity of conceptual contents and the objectivity of deontic statuses are ultimately understood in terms of the contrast between the immediate deontic attitudes of acknowledging and attributing commitments (including inferential commitments) and the mediate deontic attitude of consequentially undertaking commitments (p. 596). When one acknowledges (i.e., attributes to oneself) some commitment, one thereby undertakes (not only this commitment, but also) further consequential commitments that one may not acknowledge. Thus anyone's commitments go beyond what he himself acknowledges (which, in the context of Brandom's account, seems to boil down to the fact that one may be *attributed* commitments one doesn't acknowledge). But what goes beyond what one acknowledges will be differently specified from different perspectives, since it can only be specified relative

to a context of collateral doxastic and inferential commitments which one may not acknowledge (and which may not even be attributed to one).

On the assumption that each individual is able not only to acknowledge and attribute commitments but also to attribute acknowledgements and attributions, each individual will make a distinction between what someone else is "really" committed to and what this someone acknowledges being committed to. Now, which consequential commitments *X* will attribute to *Y* (what *X* will take *Y* to be "really" committed to) depends on which collateral commitments *X* *acknowledges* (and not on *X*'s "real" inferential commitments, i.e., not on which collateral commitments are *attributed* to *X*). In this way, what appears to us as a distinction between what *X* takes *Y* to be committed to and what *X* takes *Y* to acknowledge being committed to, appears to *X* as a distinction between what *Y* is committed to and what *Y* acknowledges being committed to, and what appears to us as a distinction between what *X* is committed to and what *X* acknowledges being committed to, appears to *X* as a distinction between what someone else takes him to be committed to and what he is committed to. In other words, someone's consequential, "real" commitments are determined by someone else's *acknowledged* commitments: *Y*'s *mediate* deontic attitude of consequentially undertaking a commitment has been explained in terms of *X*'s *immediate* deontic attitudes of acknowledging and attributing commitments:

> Every scorekeeping perspective maintains a distinction in practice between normative status and (immediate) normative attitude — between what is objectively correct and what is merely *taken* to be correct, between what an interlocutor is actually committed to and what that interlocutor is merely *taken* to be committed to. Yet what from the point of view of a scorekeeper is objectively correct […] can be understood by us […] entirely in terms of the immediate *attitudes*, the acknowledgements and attributions, of the scorekeeper. In this way the maintenance, from every perspective, of a distinction between status and attitude is reconciled with the methodological phenomenalism that insists that all that really needs to be considered is attitudes (Brandom 1994: 597).

Even if it can be granted that everyone involved in a discursive practice must be able to contrast what is correct with what is taken as correct by someone else, and what someone else is "really" committed to with what he merely takes himself to be committed to, this can at most sustain the conclusion that every rational agent has some (perhaps only practical) grasp of some notion of objectivity,[10] but *not* the conclusion that this notion in fact applies to anything, i.e. that there are any such things as objective deontic statuses or conceptual contents. On the other hand, if *we* are ourselves among these rational agents, then we must ourselves *take it* that there are objective statuses and contents. And if *we* do that, then it would be incoherent

for us to deny that there are objective deontic statuses and conceptual contents. It would seem to follow that every rational agent is entitled to assume that there are such objective statuses and contents, even though it doesn't follow *that there are* such statuses and contents. But perhaps this is all that Brandom needs, or means to claim. Indeed one could go on to insist that it's precisely because there is a difference between being assumed to exist and existing, that one cannot infer that there are objective statuses and contents from the fact that they are assumed to exist.

4. Whether or not this is enough to vindicate Brandom's claim to have shown how *objective* deontic statuses and conceptual contents can be *instituted* by linguistic practice, there is a further question as to how this account is supposed to meet the normativist constraint, according to which an adequate account of content should appeal to irreducibly normative terms.[11] For it looks very much as if the basic normative notion of deontic status has been explained in terms of the notion of practical attitude. There are at least two ways in which Brandom can address this worry.

First, he could insist that his explanation of deontic statuses is not reductive, and doesn't provide a way of dispensing with normative terms. Indeed, to hold that deontic statuses are "instituted" by scorekeeping practice is not to say that talk of deontic statuses can be *replaced* by talk of practical deontic attitudes. However, one would like to know exactly what this "institution" relation consists in; and Brandom is not very helpful on this score. More importantly, even if it were granted that no reduction of deontic statuses to deontic attitudes has been provided, one could still feel that the normativist constraint has not been completely met, on the ground that deontic statuses have nonetheless been explained in terms of deontic attitudes, which means that the basic explanatory terms are not normative at all.

The other answer is one which Brandom explicitly gives at the very end, in the last 25 pages of his book. It is only there (Brandom 1994: 626–627) that one is told that deontic statuses and conceptual contents are not instituted by the *actual* practical attitudes of the members of the community, but by the practical attitudes that it would be *appropriate* for them to take: "Talk of deontic statuses can in general be traded in only for talk of *proprieties* governing the adoption and alteration of deontic attitudes" (p. 626).

At this point, Brandom seems to be saying something like: what makes it the case that someone has a certain discursive deontic status, or that a given performance has a certain conceptual content, is that it would be correct to take this someone as having this status, or to take this performance as having this content. This is hardly illuminating.

Brandom tries to make this move acceptable by suggesting (Brandom 1994: 637) that the same strategy should be applied here once again: just as deontic

statuses and conceptual contents have (purportedly) been explained in terms of when it is appropriate to attribute them, *when it is appropriate to attribute them* should, in turn, be explained in terms of when it is appropriate to take it as appropriate to attribute them. In other words, which practical deontic attitudes are correct depends on which practical deontic attitudes are (correctly) taken to be correct by the interpreter; just as which deontic status someone has, depends on which deontic status it is correct to attribute to him/her:

> Regularities of communal behavior and disposition specified in nonnormative terms cannot *dictate* the attribution of scorekeeping practices that institute a particular set of normative statuses and confer a particular set of propositional contents. In adopting such a stance, the interpreter takes the interlocutors being interpreted to be *committed* to keeping score according to specific patterns (Brandom 1994.: 638).

Once we have reached this point, the only remaining task is, as Brandom (1994: 638) says, "to discuss the nature of the norms that govern the choice of an interpretation of a community as engaging in one set of implicitly normative, content-conferring discursive scorekeeping practices rather than another, or rather than describing their behavior exclusively in nonnormative terms".

One would expect the same kind of answer as before: what makes it correct for an interpreter to attribute a commitment to certain scorekeeping practices is that it is correctly taken to be correct by someone or something else (or perhaps: what makes it correct for an interpreter to attribute commitment to certain scorekeeping practices is that he/she correctly takes it to be correct). Brandom's answer is actually somewhat different, but almost as disappointing. Very roughly, it consists in claiming that since there is no essential difference between what happens when an external interpreter takes a member of a given community as correctly or incorrectly attributing a certain deontic status to some other member of his/her own community and what happens when an internal discursive scorekeeper takes a member of his/her own community as correctly or incorrectly attributing a certain deontic status to some other member of his/her own community, both activities are governed by the same norms. This means that the answer to the question, when it is correct to take someone as engaged in some determinate content-conferring practices, is the same as the answer to the question when it is correct to take someone as having certain doxastic commitments:

> once the task of external interpretation is recognized as a special case of internal interpretation (scorekeeping), the practical norms that govern the attribution of one set of conceptually contentful commitments rather than another can be recognized as just one more instance of deciding what others of us are talking about and what they are saying about it (Brandom 1994: 647).

But now we just have to repeat the question we were asking at the beginning: when is it correct for an agent to attribute a certain doxastic commitment to someone else? This time, Brandom doesn't try to give a phenomenalist answer; he claims instead that the norms that determine when this is correct are not available in advance as a set of explicit principles, but are "implicit in the particular practices by which we understand one another in ordinary conversation" (p. 646). Either the practices in question are to be understood as specifiable in non-normative terms, or they are to be understood as specifiable only in normative terms. In the first case, we seem to be back to the worry that norms are ultimately to be understood in nonnormative terms, contrary to what the normativist constraint requires. And in the second case, we seem to be left with the somewhat unilluminating claim that what something means is what it is correctly taken to mean. This will remain unilluminating as long as we have no explanation of when it is correct to take something as having a certain content or someone as having a certain doxastic commitment. Since Brandom (p. 647) claims that "there is never any final answer as to what is correct" and that what our practices and doxastic commitments really are (how they should be interpreted) is bound to remain pretty much a matter of ongoing debate (or as he would probably prefer to put it, a matter of ongoing "conversation"), we are going to wait for a long time, indeed.

Perhaps Brandom's point is that we are always involved in the process of conferring contents on our performances and of instituting the norms which govern our linguistic activities. One could perhaps describe this process itself, but one could not go on to say *what* these norms and contents are without thereby engaging in this process. This suggests that Brandom's work is best seen not as aiming to contribute to anything like a "positive" science of meaning, but as implying that there is no such "science" to be had. This is not to say that it may as well be dismissed, but that it remains unclear exactly what it is meant to accomplish.

Notes

1. These inferential relations are to be conceived as being themselves "instituted" by practice, just as deontic statuses are.

2. See also Brandom (1994: xiii, xxii, 7, 61, 155, 190) for some other significant statements.

3. This comes out most clearly in his discussion of norms as explicit rules (Brandom 1994: 18–29).

4. These locutions look at least superficially similar to "seeing this as a rabbit", and should at least *prima facie* be taken as corresponding to intentionally contentful attitudes.

5. In view of the fact that it is certainly possible to conceptually think that *p* without conceptually thinking that anyone conceptually thinks that *p*, it seems that it should also be coherent to attribute the capacity to conceptually think that p without attributing the capacity to conceptually think that anyone conceptually thinks that *p*, which may explain the unattractiveness of Davidson's (2001) contention. Brandom's idea that one can practically attribute conceptual thoughts without having the capacity to conceptually think that anyone thinks anything, is what permits him to reject this Davidsonian claim while maintaining the interpretationist view that nothing can have any content except insofar as it is taken to have content.

6. As far as I can see, this conclusion would remain unaffected if (as suggested by an anonymous referee) it turned out that these practical deontic attitudes were actually constituted by dispositions to sanction certain performances in specific ways.

7. See also Brandom (1994: 639–640), where he is more explicit about this.

8. Hence, the problem I am trying to uncover is not that the difference between mediate and immediate deontic attitudes (on which the objectivity of conceptual content depends) can be grasped only by fully logical agents (for I would expect this to go without saying); but that such a difference can exist only in a community of agents who have the capacity for higher-order deontic attitudes and that Brandom's analyses seem to imply that only fully logical agents can have this capacity. Of course, I may be wrong about that, but if I am, then it must be possible to explain how objective deontic statuses and conceptual contents can be instituted without even alluding to the ascriptional locutions.

9. Here are two relevant quotes from Brandom's book:

"Where the specification of the content depends only on auxiliary premises that, according to the ascriber, the target of the ascription acknowledges being committed to, it is put in *de dicto* position, within the 'that' clause. Where the specification of the content depends on auxiliary premises that the ascriber endorses, but the target of the ascription may not, it is put in *de re* position" (Brandom 1994: 506).

"The substitutional commitments that govern the expressions used to specify the content of the commitments ascribed can […] either be attributed to the one to whom the doxastic commitment is ascribed or be undertaken by the one ascribing it; that social difference of deontic attitude turns out to be what determines whether the ascription is *de dicto* or *de re*. Communication requires that scorekeepers be able to move back and forth between the significance tokenings have as governed by the commitments they themselves acknowledge, on the one hand, and by the commitments they take the speaker to acknowledge, on the other" (p. 503).

10. As Brandom (1994: 600) puts it: "what is shared by all discursive perspectives is that there is a difference between what is objectively correct … and what is merely taken to be so".

11. The question is explicitly raised by Brandom (1994: 626).

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Brandom's solution to the objectivity problem

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The central challenge to Brandom's theory of propositional content, as he recognizes himself, is to meet the following two apparently conflicting conditions of adequacy, at the same token which he lays down for such a theory: It must do justice to the objectivity of conceptual norms and it should embody a phenomenalist approach to normativity, according to which normative statuses must be understood as being instituted by practical normative attitudes. The strategy Brandom employs for reconciling these requirements is intricate and somewhat elusive. This paper aims to make it more accessible by reconstructing its main outline. I hope to show thereby that an objection raised by Rödl against Brandom's account of objectivity is based on a misconception of that strategy.

Keywords: Assessment, attitude, conceptual norms, conformism, external, intentional notions, internal, objectivity problem, phenomenalism.

1. Introduction

In *Making it Explicit*, Brandom lays down the following condition of adequacy for a theory of propositional content: such a theory must do justice to the objectivity of conceptual norms, that is, to the fact that any concept user can be mistaken in his assessment of what those norms require. However, one of the fundamental methodological commitments of Brandom (1994) — namely, to a certain type of phenomenalism about norms — seems to be incompatible with an acknowledgement of the objectivity of conceptual norms.[1] According to this phenomenalist approach toward normativity, normative statuses must be understood as being instituted by normative attitudes that are practical, i.e. implicit in practices. The kind of dependency of statuses on attitudes can be spelled out thus: deontic statuses and attitudes are conceptually linked in such a way that a complete specification of the

statuses pertaining to a practice can be derived from a complete specification of the attitudes of the practitioners. On the face of it, this requirement precludes the existence of objective norms. For it is of the essence of such norms that they give rise to normative statuses (such as the correctness). As such they are precisely *not* determined by the relevant attitudes, particularly not by the attitude of taking a claim or a performance to be correct. Throughout his book, Brandom emphasizes that the problem is how to accommodate the objectivity of conceptual norms with the phenomenalist approach to normativity. This *objectivity problem* is one of the central challenges to his explanatory project.[2] However, the strategy he employs for solving the objectivity problem is somewhat evasive.

In the following, I try to make Brandom's strategy more accessible by reconstructing its main outline. In the first two parts of the paper, I shall locate the two commitments that give rise to the objectivity problem — the commitment to the phenomenalist approach (Part I) and the commitment to the objectivity of conceptual norms (Part II) — in the context of Brandom's overall explanatory strategy. In the concluding part, I turn to the account of objectivity that Brandom (1994) presents.

2. The phenomenalist approach to normativity

The explanatory strategy Brandom (1994) pursues can be summed up as follows: Brandom tries to elucidate central intentional and semantic notions like *assertion*, *belief*, *intention*, *truth*, *reference* and so forth by describing a certain practice — the practice of *discursive scorekeeping* — in which propositional content is conferred on states and performances playing suitable roles within it — in virtue of the fact that the structure of that practice qualifies it as a discursive one, i.e. as the Sellarsian game of giving and asking for reasons. In particular, two kinds of commitments undertaken by the practitioners — called *doxastic* and *practical commitments* to indicate their explanatory role — are supposed to turn out as beliefs and intentions respectively. In this way, other commitments of the practitioners — *inferential commitments* — are to be revealed as relating to the propriety of inferences. Since Brandom aspires to give a non-circular account of propositional content, this model practice is to be specified in purely non-intentional and non-semantic terms.

On the other hand, the language used to describe it — in which the terms "commitment" and "entitlement" play a key role — is normative through and through. This combination of a commitment to employ a normative metalanguage with an aspiration toward non-circularity leads to the following difficulty.

In central cases, normative terms like "commitment" and "entitlement" cannot be understood apart from intentional notions. For instance, by calling a certain behavior correct, one presupposes a dimension of assessment like *prudence*, *morality*, *etiquette*, *law* and so forth. Their evaluation seems to address the behavior as an intentional action.[3] So Brandom cannot take for granted the sense of the normative expressions in terms of which his account of propositional content is framed without running the risk of rendering the account circular. He must therefore offer an elucidation of these expressions which does not rely on a prior grasp of intentional or semantic concepts. It is precisely in discharging this explanatory obligation that he deploys the phenomenalist approach to normativity. It seems doubtful, however, whether the phenomenalist approach is suitable for such a task, because it is unclear *prima facie* what the normative attitudes to which it appeals might be but propositional attitudes. Thus it seems natural to identify *the attitude* of taking a performance to be correct with *the belief* or judgment that it is correct. So, in Brandom's account of propositional content, the phenomenalist approach can only fulfill its function of preventing an explanatory circle if the notion of a practical normative attitude is itself explained in non-intentional terms. Brandom tries to meet this requirement by giving the following account of what it means for a normative attitude — the basic form of which is taking a performance to be correct/incorrect — to be implicit in a practice:[4] taking, or treating a performance to be correct/incorrect in practice is the same as being disposed to reward/punish a behavior of the relevant kind.

In order to forestall the objection that this explanation still remains in the circle of intentional concepts, since imposing a sanction on a person is essentially something one does because one *believes* that person to have transgressed a norm, Brandom insists that, in the most primitive case, rewarding/punishing of a performance can simply consist in its positive/negative reinforcement.

The phenomenalist account of normativity that emerged in the last paragraphs as the account in terms of which the deontic statuses and attitudes figuring in Brandom's characterization of discursive scorekeeping must be understood can be summarized as follows. Deontic statuses are products of practices that can be construed in accordance with the model of Haugeland's *conformists* — to which Brandom (1994: 34) refers explicitly—, that is, as self-sustaining patterns shaping the behavior of a group of interacting creatures, patterns which are maintained by positive and negative reinforcement.[5] In the basic case, the reinforcing responses — i.e. the sanctions available in the practice — are external to the systems of norms that can be discerned in it. That is, they can be specified without referring to the deontic statuses of the practitioners and their performances — for instance, as beating with sticks. But in a more sophisticated form of such a practice, the

sanctions are internal; i.e. they can only be specified by referring to the deontic statuses pertaining to the practice — for instance, as withdrawing the entitlement to produce a given performance (p. 44). However, with regard to the sophisticated variety, too, the feature in virtue of which a type of response — specifiable, in this case, only in terms of deontic statuses — counts as a sanction can be captured in a purely behavioristic vocabulary.[6] Thus, it is due to its negatively reinforcing effect — with respect to the behavior responded to — that the imposture of a particular action in response to that behavior is a punishment. The same applies, mutatis mutandis, to rewards.

3. Objectivity and representational purport

Brandom (1994) distinguishes two constitutive dimensions of propositional content: *inferential articulation* and *representational purport*. In the first dimension, bearers of propositional content are marked off from other things by their role as reasons, i.e. as premises of inferences, in the second, by the fact that they possess truth conditions and purport to refer to objects. Brandom (1994: xxiii) presents his position as a form of inferentialism; that is, as an attempt to explain the representational purport of content bearers in terms of their inferential articulation. In a way, this self-categorization is quite misleading. In order to see this, one must remember that the concept of a reason is no less a semantic concept than the concepts of truth or reference. Therefore, Brandom cannot be faithful to his project of providing a *non-circular* account of propositional content if he relies on either of these notions as an *unexplained explainer*. Furthermore, one cannot take something to be a reason without presupposing that it has truth conditions — and *vice versa*. From this it follows that Brandom cannot carry out his explanatory program without explaining both these aspects of contentfulness at once. Accordingly, in order to show that deontic statuses have propositional content in virtue of playing certain roles in the model practice, he must reveal them as possessing representational purport and, by the same token, show that their interconnections are inferential relations.

In Brandom's view, conceptual norms, i.e. norms that specifically govern propositionally contentful states and performances, are objective precisely in virtue of the representational purport possessed by them.[7] For, as he argues, the concept of truth essentially involves the notion that a belief or a claim can be false, even though it may be held to be true by everybody even at all times — since it is answerable for its correctness to the way the world actually is, and not merely to the way it is taken to be.[8] But given the internal connection between propositional

content, representational purport, and objectivity indicated above, Brandom is not entitled to claim that the structure of the model practice is sufficient to qualify states and performances suitably caught up in it as propositionally contentful, unless he gives us reasons to believe that the norms implicit in that practice are at least partly objective — i.e. unless he has solved the objectivity problem. Brandom (1994) does not embark upon the project of solving the objectivity problem until Chapter 8. However, he uses intentional and semantic terms like "assertion", "reason", and so forth, to describe, and the label "discursive scorekeeping" to refer to, the model practice from the very beginning.

4. Brandom's solution of the objectivity problem

How can the objectivity problem be solved, that is, how can the phenomenalist approach to normativity be reconciled with an acknowledgment of the objectivity of conceptual norms? It just cannot, one might be tempted to answer. For the phenomenalist approach, according to which normative statuses are determined entirely by practical normative attitudes, implies that there are no objective deontic statuses, and therefore also no such norms. In other words, a solution to the objectivity problem is impossible if the phenomenalist approach is taken to define (implicitly) the normative terms that Brandom employs in specifying the model practice. Its role, however, does not have to be understood in this way. Alternatively, one could conceive of it as explaining these normative terms only by way of *paradigms*. The relevant paradigms would be provided for by his description of primitive practices in Chapters 1 and 3 as well as by his allusion to Haugeland's community of conformists — that is, by practices in which the normative statuses are *not objective*, since they are instituted by the practical normative attitudes of the participants.[9] Thus, Brandom would indeed begin with an understanding of normative terms that is shaped by the phenomenalist approach. But he might go beyond it with his description of the model practice.[10] For on the present construal of his explanatory strategy, this description could constitute *a further paradigm* for the application of these terms that, unlike the paradigms from which he starts out, does not conform to the phenomenalist approach. Accordingly, the objectivity problem could be solved by showing that this last step in the elucidation of the normative terms confers a sense on them that leaves room for the acknowledgement of objective deontic statuses — without undermining Brandom's claim to be giving a *non-circular* account of propositional content. If his account of propositional content is read along these lines, then it seems apt to say that the phenomenalist approach just appears as a ladder that needs to be thrown away after one has climbed up on it.

The chapter to which Brandom repeatedly, and notoriously, refers to in all previous chapters as the place where the objectivity problem should eventually be solved is Chapter 8. Here, he expounds how locutions specifying the representational content of utterances and attitudes, in particular *de re* ascriptions of beliefs, can be introduced into the 'language'[11] used by the participants of the model practice. In accordance with the internal connection between representational purport and the objectivity of conceptual norms, Brandom stresses that *de re* ascriptions express an idea of objective correctness, namely, of truth. Thus he proposes that the *de re* ascription of a belief, by specifying what the things that the belief is about really are (according to the ascriber), make explicit "what individual, according to the ascriber, it is whose properties must be investigated in order to determine whether the ascribed belief is *true*" (Brandom 1994: 584). He embeds *de re* ascriptions in this model by giving the following analysis of their essential function: it is characteristic of *de re* ascriptions that they mark explicitly which part of the content specification depends on the doxastic and inferential commitments undertaken by the ascriber — in Brandom's regimented idiom this is the part occurring within the scope of "of" — and which part is framed in terms of the commitments attributed by the ascriber to the target of the ascription, namely, the part occurring within the scope of "that".[12] They make explicit a difference between two types of normative attitudes that is fundamental to the model practice: the difference between *acknowledging* and *attributing* (the acknowledgment of) doxastic and inferential commitments. In this analysis, Brandom maintains that a *de re* ascription is an ascription of an objective deontic status precisely because it makes this social-perspectival distinction explicit. This is so, he argues, because a doxastic commitment that a practitioner ascribes on the basis of collateral commitments acknowledged by that practitioner is *for her* an objective deontic status. For such a commitment might differ from the commitments an acknowledgment of which (a special practical normative attitude) is attributed by the practitioner. The account of objective correctness that emerges from these considerations is summarized by Brandom as follows:

> "[E]very scorekeeping perspective maintains a distinction in practice between normative statuses and (immediate) normative attitudes — between what is objectively correct and what is merely *taken* to be correct, between what an interlocutor is actually committed to and what that interlocutor is merely *taken* to be committed to. Yet what from the point of view of a scorekeeper is objectively correct [...] can be understood by us [...] entirely in terms of the immediate *attitudes*, the acknowledgment and attributions, of the scorekeeper. […] In this way the maintenance, from every perspective, of a distinction between status and attitude is reconciled with the methodological phenomenalism that insists that all that really needs to be considered is attitudes" (p. 597).

Does this perspectival account of objectivity, as Brandom promises, solve the objectivity problem? In fact, it seems obvious that it does not. For this account does not even set out to show that the model practice contains objective normative statuses — it merely shows that this appears so from the point of view of the practitioners. Nevertheless, the expectations raised in the preceding chapters of Brandom (1994) are not entirely misplaced. For the account is central to Brandom's solution of the objectivity problem in two respects. Firstly, it explains what it means to ascribe an objective deontic status — and therefore, the very idea of such a status — in accordance with the phenomenalist approach, that is, without presupposing or implying that an ascription of this kind is ever true.[13] Secondly, the perspectival account yields an important premise for an argument aimed to establish that the participants of the model practice are bound by attitude-transcendent, that is objective, norms: this must be so according to *an internal interpretation* — i.e. of an interpretation by which the practical attitudes of the participants are made explicit.[14] Given the further premise that any interpretation of a group of interacting creatures in terms of the model is virtually identical with such an internal interpretation, the first premise implies that the denial of objective normative statuses with respect to the practice is inconsistent. For it follows from the second premise that such a denial would necessarily be framed in terms of a conception of the practice that is congenial to an internal interpretation, that is — according to the first premise — in terms of objective normative statuses. From the inconsistency of the denial, one could in turn infer — via a *reductio ad absurdum* — that attitude-transcendent statuses must be ascribed to the practitioners and their performances.

Brandom acknowledges in practice — even though he fails to make this acknowledgment explicit — that the considerations put forward in Chapter 8 are insufficient to solve the objectivity problem. Thus, in Chapter 9 he returns to the question of how to resolve the apparent tension between the reductive story about norms as instituted by practical attitudes, presented at the outset of Brandom (1994), and his insistence on the independence of conceptual norms from such attitudes.[15] In accordance with the argument for the presence of objective statuses in the model practice envisaged in the last paragraph, the following claim takes center stage in Brandom's treatment of this question at the end of Brandom (1994): with regard to the practice, an external interpretation collapses into an internal one. But how does Brandom justify the claim that an external interpretation coalesces with an internal one? In fact, he does not take much trouble in arguing for this claim; he readily assumes that

> "[t]he relation between the attitudes of an interpreter who attributes discursive practices (and hence original intentionality) to a community, on the one hand, and the proprieties of scorekeeping implicit in those practices, on the other, is

> modeled on the relation between the deontic attitudes of scorekeepers and the normative statuses they attribute" (Brandom 1994: 639).

It is significant that in this passage Brandom, in describing the relation of the external to the internal interpretation, takes it for granted that the structure of interaction laid out in Brandom (1994) actually amounts to a discursive practice. For the claim would quite obviously be true if the adequacy of his model for a discursive practice could be presupposed. In this case, an external interpretation — i.e. an interpretation of a group of interacting creatures in terms of the model — would represent these creatures as being engaged in linguistic exchange. Therefore the attribution of propositional attitudes to them, and of linguistic meaning to their utterances, would be at its core. But it is precisely via such an attribution that the parties in a linguistic exchange relate to one another — according to the external interpretation, *if* it actually concerns a discursive practice. But Brandom seems to commit a *petitio* if he relied on the adequacy of his account of propositional content in solving the objectivity problem. For, as pointed out above, the account would be adequate only if the model practice were to encompass objective deontic statuses.

Furthermore, there is another problem with the alleged collapse of the external into an internal interpretation. As Rödl (2000) has in effect argued, an identification of the external with an internal interpretation is incoherent for the following reason: the former, based on the account of the model practice set forth in Brandom (1994) and therefore embodying the phenomenalist approach to normativity, only addresses deontic statuses derivable from the practical attitudes of the interpreted creatures. By contrast, as has been made clear in Chapter 8, the internal interpretation essentially involves the attribution of objective deontic statuses.

However, there is a reading of Chapter 9 according to which its central argument is less off the mark than these criticisms suggest. According to this reading, Brandom pursues a strategy for solving the objectivity problem that is based on the following assumption: by Chapter 9, the model has been elaborated to such an extent that in it we can make out a counterpart to every essential feature of a discursive practice *except for the objectivity* of conceptual norms. This near-comprehensive structural parallel between the model and our discursive practices provides a *prima-facie* justification for their identification. The burden of proof regarding the adequacy of this account of propositonal content thereby shifts in the following way: in order to establish the adequacy of the account, one does not need to demonstrate that the participants of the model practice are bound by objective norms, but only that, by taking it to be a discursive practice, one *would not contradict* the objectivity of conceptual norms. Accordingly, in Chapter 9 Brandom strives toward a solution of the objectivity problem by highlighting the fact that his

model for a discursive practice *leaves room* for an admission of objective deontic statuses. It does so, according to Brandom (1994: 528), because the account of the model practice set forth in Chapters 1 through 8 is incomplete in the following way: it does not settle the question under which conditions a specific interpretation of a group of interacting creatures in terms of the model is appropriate. It is incomplete in this respect since it is marked by the following two features: it implies that the attribution of deontic statuses to the practitioners as well as to their performances is grossly underdetermined by their dispositions to negatively/positively reinforce certain behavior of other practitioners, and hence, by their practical normative attitudes. On the other hand, it embodies the phenomenalist approach to normativity, according to which there is nothing else to go by except such dispositions in determining normative statuses.

In the context of the *prima-facie* entitlement to take Brandom's model for a discursive practice to be adequate and, therefore, to an identification of the external with the internal interpretation, it seems natural and legitimate to fill this gap in the account by exploiting the analysis of an internal interpretation given in Chapter 8 as follows. According to this analysis, attributing doxastic commitments to another scorekeeper amounts, precisely, to attributing objective normative statuses, since it is constrained not only by the practical normative attitudes or "immediate normative attitudes", as Brandom (1994: 597) puts it, adopted by the attributee according to the attributor, but also by the doxastic and inferential commitments acknowledged by the latter. If one conceives of an external interpretation along these lines, then the conditions under which one would be entitled to such an interpretation would be determined sufficiently — notwithstanding the underdetermination of normative statuses by practical attitudes of the interpreted creatures. So, according to the reading of Chapter 9 proposed here, Brandom tries to solve the objectivity problem by showing that his account of the model practice does not preclude an attribution of objective normative statuses to the practitioners, since the account calls for being supplemented by importing the notion of objective deontic statuses into it.[16]

Note also that, in this reading, Brandom's appeal to the collapse of the external into an internal interpretation is not exposed to Rödl's objection. In order to see this, one must take into account that this objection presupposes that the normative terms in which the external interpretation is framed are (implicitly) defined by the phenomenalist approach to normativity. For only then would it be incoherent to assume that this interpretation is identical with the one in which objective normative statuses are ascribed to the interpreted creatures. But as I read Brandom, the phenomenalist approach is only supposed to yield a partial definition of the normative terms, namely one that is concerned with the constraint on their use relating to the

practical normative attitudes of the creatures to which they are applied. According to this reading, however, there is another constraint on the use of these terms — relating to the overall set of doxastic and inferential commitments undertaken by the interpreter — that remains in the background until it eventually emerges in Chapter 9, where the external interpretation turns out to be an internal one.

I only try to show here that Brandom does indeed meet the challenge he takes to be the central challenge to his explanatory project: to reconcile his commitment to the objectivity of conceptual norms with his commitment to the phenomenalist approach. But even if the argument is on the right track, there could be objections to Brandom's explanatory project that may prove fatal. In concluding, I want to hint at one such objection which I have elaborated elsewhere (Grönert 2005). In Chapter 4, Brandom (1994) puts forward an account of the role of normative expressions in terms of the model practice, according to which the basic function of these terms is to make explicit the endorsement of patterns of practical reasoning. This account sharply contrasts with the manner in which Brandom elucidates the normative vocabulary of his metalanguage. For the following is true of the phenomenalist approach to normativity, whether this approach is meant to yield an implicit definition of this vocabulary or only to sketch the basic paradigms of its use. An understanding of normative terms based on the phenomenalist approach does not assign to them any specific role within practical reasoning. This feature of the phenomenalist approach gives rise to a serious problem for Brandom's explanatory strategy. In order to see this, one must take a closer look at an aspect of his strategy which I have only hinted at so far.

The core contention of Brandom's account of propositional content is this: The expressions by means of which the specific elements of the model practice are picked out can be mapped on basic semantic or intentional terms in such a way that any of these expressions captures at least one crucial sense of the corresponding intentional or semantic term. In particular, the expressions "practical commitment" and "doxastic commitment" — which refer to the two basic types of commitments pertaining to the model practice — fulfill one of the central roles played by "intention" and "belief", respectively.[17]

In order to justify this contention one needs to show that the inferential role of any such expression matches to a certain extent that of the corresponding intentional or semantic term. What we need is a certain kind of inferential isomorphism which can be described thus: if an inference, in which the premises and conclusion of which only basic semantic or intentional terms occur,[18] is valid on the relevant construal of these terms, the inference remains valid, if in its premises and in its conclusion all semantic and intentional terms are uniformly replaced by the matching expressions of Brandom's explanatory metalanguage. The relevant inferences

also include practical inferences, e.g. inferences of the form below, in which non-intentional terms for types of performances take the place of "A" and "B".

(a) I intend to do A.
Doing B is a means for doing A.
∴ I shall do B.

Such a practical inference is valid in the sense that for anybody who reasonably endorses its premises, it is *prima facie* rational to act in accordance with its conclusion. Brandom's account of propositional content is only appropriate, if the scheme that results from replacing "I intend" with "I am practically committed" in (a), that is the following scheme, represents a sound pattern of practical reasoning:[19]

(b) I am practically committed to do A.
Doing B is a means for doing A.
∴ I shall do B.

But the role of Brandom's normative metalanguage, as it is determined by the phenomenalist approach, is only concerned with the use of this language in constructing a theory about the behavior of a group of interacting creatures. So the phenomenalist approach does not assign any specific role within practical reasoning to the normative terms by means of which the model practice is described. From this it follows that we have no reason to take an instantiation of (b) to be a good practical inference. We have, accordingly, reasons to doubt Brandom's account of propositional content.[20]

Notes

1. Here are some relevant quotes from Brandom's book: "Looking at the practice a little more closely involves cashing out the talk of deontic statuses by translating it into talk of deontic attitudes". (Brandom 1994: 166) — "[N]ormative statuses have been taken to be instituted by normative attitudes, so that talk of commitments can be traded in for talk of undertaking and attributing commitments". (ibid.: 296–297) — "The question now becomes, What must one be able to *do* in order to count as *taking* or *treating* a performance as correct or incorrect? What is it for such a normative attitude — attributing a normative significance or status to a performance – to be implicit in practice?" (ibid.: 32)

2. "Indeed the primary explanatory challenge to a social practice theory of discursive commitments is to show how, starting with the sort of norms for which Wright's analysis is correct — normative statuses about which the community's all-inclusive practical assessment cannot be mistaken, such as who is really married or what obligations are incurred by spitting in front of the chief — genuine, and therefore *objective*, conceptual norms can be elaborated". (ibid.: 54)

3. This difficulty of Brandom's explanatory strategy has also been stressed by Rödl (2000).

4. Brandom (1994: 35) expresses this account in the following passages: "Treating a performance as correct is taken to be positively sanctioning it, which is to say positively reinforcing it".— "This version takes it that to treat a response to a certain stimulus as incorrect is just to punish it, in the sense of responding to it in a way that in fact decreases the probability that the one being assessed will respond in that way to that sort of stimulus in the future". (ibid.: 42)

5. Haugeland (1982: 15–16) explains this notion of conformism as follows: "Imagine a community of versatile and interactive creatures, not otherwise specified except that they are *conformists*. 'Conformism' here means not just imitativeness (monkey see, monkey do), but also censoriousness – that is, a positive tendency to see that one's neighbors do likewise, and to suppress variation. This is to be thought of as a complicated behavioral disposition, which the creatures have by nature ('wired in'). It presupposes in them a capacity to react differentially (e.g. perception), and also some power to alter one another's dispositions more or less permanently (compare reinforcement, punishment, etc.). But it does not presuppose thought, reasoning, language, or any 'higher' faculty. — The net effect of this conformism is a systematic peer pressure within the community, which can be viewed as a kind of mutual attraction among the various members' behavioral dispositions. Under its influence, these dispositions draw 'closer' to each other, in the sense that they become more similar; that is, the community members tend to act alike (in like circumstances). [...] When the behavioral dispositions aggregate under the force of conformism, it isn't herds that coalesce, but *norms*. [...] The clusters that coalesce can be called 'norms' (and not just groups or types) precisely because they are generated and maintained by censoriousness; the censure attendant to deviation automatically gives the standards (the extant clusters) a *de facto* normative force".

6. Two questions must be distinguished regarding the notion of a sanction: (1) What types of response count as punishment/reward in a given practice? (2) What does it mean to ascribe to a type of response the significance of a punishment/reward? (This distinction corresponds to one pointed out by Dummett (1993:118–119) with respect to the notion of winning a game.) Brandom does not explicitly address the second question, and therefore does not explicitly endorse the quasi-behavioristic answer that I am attributing to him here. Nevertheless, I take this attribution to be justified. My reason for this is not just that Brandom points to negative/positive reinforcement as primitive paradigms of punishment/reward but, more importantly, that there seems to be no other plausible way of answering the second question without drawing upon intentional notions.

7. This internal connection between representational content and objective deontic statuses is described by Brandom (1994: 53) as follows: "It is a fundamental feature of our understanding of our concepts that they incorporate *objective* commitments. Thus, our use of the term 'mass' is such that the facts settle whether the mass of the universe is large enough that it will eventually suffer gravitational collapse, independently of what we, even all of us and forever, take those facts to be".

8. To be sure, some truth claims are not objective in this sense. In particular, certain claims concerning social facts are an exception. Thus it is an essential part of the truth conditions of the claim that can be expressed by the sentence "The Euro is now the currency of the EU" that it is believed to be true by some people. However, an understanding of such claims presupposes a grasp of ordinary empirical claims that *are* objective in the relevant sense. This means that there can be no bearers of propositional content in the absence of objective norms.

9. "Practices of this sort can be described in purely responsive terms for prelinguistic communities". (Brandom 1994: 161)

10. Brandom does not say that his account of propositional content eventually goes beyond the phenomenalist approach. Instead, he (1994) anounces in Chapter 9 that the phenomenalism about norms that governs his project finally turns out to be a *normative* phenomenalism. However, this is just a misleading formulation of the same point. For, as Rödl (2000) has observed, the essence of normative phenomenalism as Brandom characterizes it is the rejection of the phenomenalist approach to normativity from which he starts out.

11. The quotation marks are meant to remind the reader that the use of semantic and intentional terms in describing the model practice must be understood as programmatic until a solution to the objectivity problem is provided.

12. "Where the specification of the content depends only on auxiliary premises that, according to the ascriber, the target of the ascription *acknowledges* being committed to, it is put in *de dicto* position, within the "that" clause. Where the specification of the content depends on auxiliary premises that the *ascriber* endorses, but the target of the ascription may not, it is put in *de re* position". (Brandom 1994: 506)

13. Lance and O'Leary-Hawthorne (1997: 174) draw a parallel between such an approach to objective deontic statuses, which they endorse, and so-called error theories in moral philosophy. They put it thus: "Thus, familiar from ethics are so-called "error"-theories which specify the contents of ethical claims — tell us what is asserted in saying something is morally good, for example — but then argue that nothing in reality can answer to that content. While we do not endorse their moral nihilism, we commend the methodology of error theories in turning first to the question of what one commits oneself to in making a normative assertion and only then tackling that of whether normative assertions are ever true".

14. Even this formulation of what is achieved by the perspectival account is, in a way, an overstatement. For crediting the practioners with an interpretation in which the concept of an objective normative status takes center stage presupposes that the programatic employment of intentional and semantic notions in specifying the model practice can ultimately be justified. Accordingly, one might be tempted to think that the argument for the presence of objective statuses in the model practice that I attribute to Brandom involves a vicious circle for the following reason. The first premise already presupposes the adequacy of his model. However, this objection would only be appropriate if objective deontic statuses could be accomodated in the model — which is precisely what the argument is supposed to establish. The considerations I put forward below, according to which Brandom may provisionally assume the adequacy of his account of propositional content in solving the objectivity problem, show why this charge of circularity misses its target.

15. "It must then be asked how such an apparently reductive story about norms as instituted by social pratices can be understood to be compatible with an insistence on the *irreducibly* normative character of the metalanguage in which norm-instituting social practices are specified." (Brandom 1994: 626)

16. For an example of this use of "immediate normative attitude", see Brandom (1994: 597).

17. According to Brandom, the expressions "intention" and "belief" are used in a wide sense as well as in a narrow sense. Thus, on some occasions we take the intentions and beliefs of a person to be precisely those that she is disposed to avow, while on other occasions we are prepared to attribute to her, in addition, those beliefs and intentions that she must have, given her other intentions and beliefs, if she is rational. It is this second, normative, sense of "belief" and "intention" that is supposed to be captured by the notion of a doxastic commitment and of a practical commitment, respectively (Brandom 1994: 196, 507).

18. The restriction to inferences in the premises and conclusion of which *only basic* semantic or intentional terms occur is necessary for the following reason: the project of providing a *non-circular* account of intentionality requires that it is not taken to be settled which inferential relations obtain between the elements of the explanatory vocabulary on the one hand and intentional and semantic terms on the other hand, until the adequacy of the account has been established. Therefore one cannot appeal to inferential relations between these elements and non-basic intentional or semantic terms in demonstrating the adequacy of the account, that is, in determining how the explanatory terms are inferentially connected to basic intentional and semantic expressions.

19. In case the terms "means" and "shall" need to be considered as intentional expressions as well, the relevant inferential scheme would not be (b), but one which results from (b) by replacing not only these two terms by suitable non-intentional expressions but also "shall" and "means". Since I am here only concerned with presenting the basic idea of my argument against Brandom's account of propositonal content, however, I waive this complication.

20. One might be tempted to defend Brandom against this criticism by appealing, once again, to the collapse of the external into an internal interpretation of the model practice. Thus, one might argue that the propriety of the relevant practical inferences emerges as a result of this collapse. However, as was pointed out above, an appeal to the collapse of the external into an internal interpretation is only justified if one is already *prima facie* entitled to take Brandom's model of a discursive practice to be appropriate. But one would only have such a *prima facie* entitlement under the following condition: by Chapter 9, the model has been elaborated to such an extent that one can make out in it a counterpart to every essential feature of a discursive practice, except for the objectivity of conceptual norms. But the argument under consideration shows that this condition does not hold good for one such essential feature, namely for the role of intentions in practical reasoning.

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Keeping track of individuals

Brandom's analysis of Kripke's puzzle and the content of belief*

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This paper gives attention to a special point in Brandom's *Making it Explicit*. Brandom proposes in MIE a "Fregean" way out of Kripke's puzzle about belief. In the first part, I analyze two main features of Brandom's strategy, the definition of anaphoric chains as senses of proper names and the implausibility of the application of a disquotational principle to proper names. In the second part, I discuss (i) the problem of the stability of contents and (ii) the problem of sharing contents. I claim that Brandom's strong holism leads to irresolvable difficulties with respect to the concept of conceptual content as it emerges from the discussion of Kripke's puzzle.

Keywords: anaphora, belief, context, disquotational principle, holism, idiolect, indexical, opacity, pronoun, translation

1. Brandom's strategy concerning the disquotational principle

1.1 Setting the stage

A traditional argument has been used against "Millian" theories of proper names, according to which the semantic role of a proper name is exhausted by its reference. This kind of view is challenged by Frege, who explains that proper names are not transparent in belief contexts because they may have different senses. Kripke (1979) goes further in challenging "any project that wishes to deal with the 'logic' of belief on any level" by a puzzle he presents in two forms. In its first form it results in an attribution of a contradiction to the speaker's judgement(s), in the other in contradicting judgments about the utterance of a speaker.

> CASE (1): Pierre, a Frenchman, believes "Londres c'est jolie". After living in London, without knowing that Londres = London, Pierre sincerely assents to the statement, "London is not pretty". As a result, we, the hearers, conclude that *Pierre believes that London is pretty and London is not pretty*.
>
> CASE (2): Pierre, after living in an ugly part of London, not knowing the entire city, simply withholds any belief about the beauty of London. As a result, we conclude that *Pierre believes that London is pretty and he does not believe that London is pretty.*

Given the assumption that Pierre is rational, these conclusions contrast with the basic intuition that Pierre himself cannot be convicted of inconsistency. What he lacks is not logical acumen, but factual information. However, it seems to be difficult to avoid such conclusions. A first reaction suggests that the puzzle may arise only in a Millian theory. In a Fregean theory there is no contradiction, because Pierre attributes two different senses to the word "London" and "Londres". However — according to Kripke — the Fregean solution does not work, because the conclusions depend on two basic principles, both shared by Millian and Fregean theories:

> TP (*Translation Principle*): If a sentence of a language expresses a truth in that language, then any translation of it into any other language also expresses a truth in that other language.
>
> DP (*Disquotational Principle*): If (and only if) a normal speaker, who is not conceptually confused, sincerely assents to 'p', then he also believes that p.

Kripke also gives a monolingual example, where, as he says, "only the disquotational principle is explicitly used": Pierre meets Paderewski at a concert and assents to "Paderewski has musical talent". Pierre believes that politicians normally have no musical talent. Pierre hears of Paderewski, the politician (who, unknown to Pierre happens also to be Paderewski, the musician), and he believes that the former has no musical talent either. Therefore he assents to "Paderewski has no musical talent". Taking "p" to be "Paderewski has musical talent", we should then attribute, respectively, (a) a contradictory belief to Pierre or (b) a contradiction to the reporter:

(a) Pierre believes p & ¬ p.
(b) Pierre believes p and Pierre does not believe p.

In MIE, Brandom uses the monolingual case in order to get a simplified version of the puzzle, dealing only with the disquotational principle. Actually, in footnote 37 of his paper, Kripke (1979) remarks that in this case, too, we should account for the problem of translation between two different idiolects. Working on this idea Santambrogio (2002) claims that (TP) is essential to the problem raised by the puzzle.[1]

According to Brandom, however, the discussion of the puzzle can be restricted to the discussion of the disquotational principle. In the first part of the paper, I take Brandom's step for granted.

Brandom suggests also that the first form of the puzzle is explained away with a *de re* attribution such as:

(a*) Pierre believes of Paderewski, who has musical talent, that he has no musical talent.

If this is right[2] the main problem is the second form of the puzzle. There we have both to attribute and not to attribute a belief to a person. As a result, we seem to be bound to be inconsistent in our attributions of beliefs. Assuming that the Paderewski case arises without the use of the Translation Pinciple, the puzzle derives from the application of the Disquotational Principle alone. Actually, the puzzle could also be considered a *reductio ad absurdum* of the principle.[3] The principle, however, is not only a very reasonable one, it is one that is well entrenched in our linguistic and logical practice. Brandom distinguishes two aspects of DP:

1. Making a connection between overt linguistic avowals by a speaker and ascription of belief by a hearer or reporter. The principle requires that if someone explicitly asserts "*p*" then we have to ascribe to that person a belief with the same content.
2. Making a connection between the expression used by the speaker and the expression used by the reporter. The principle requires that if someone uses the expression "*p*" to avow a belief, then the reporter *is allowed* to use the same expression in reporting the belief.

While DP (1) seems unobjectionable, it owes its intuitive appeal to the unexplained concept of "content"; a proper clarification of this feature of the principle therefore depends on the conception of "content" we choose. DP (2) has some apparent and relevant exceptions. Kripke himself considers some restriction to the principle, mainly that:

> (R) The sentence replacing '*p*' is to lack indexical or pronominal devices, or ambiguities that would ruin the intuitive sense of the principle.

Which kinds of expressions are then the main exceptions to DP? Mainly these are expressions whose capacity to refer relies on the ability to use tokens of different kinds ("you"/"she", "this"/"that") in reported and reporting speech. Are there other exceptions? Or, apart from these exceptions, is DP generally applicable? In particular, is DP generally applicable to proper names? Brandom uses two types of arguments: the first speaks against the general applicability of DP, the second against the applicability of DP to proper names.

In the next two sub-sections, I will discuss the main lines of the latter, leaving the former in the background. Before I do that, however, a few words on this background are in order. The argument against the general applicability of DP is based on Davidson's analysis of indirect speech.[4] In Davidson's analysis, indirect speech is a relation between tokens and not between types; in reported speech, the content expressed by words appearing in the scope of "that" depends on the context of evaluation on the side of the ascriber (the pronouns and demonstratives he uses). Here we are in agreement with Kripke's exception to DP. Developing this point Brandom builds his own conception of belief. Believing something (a propositional content) is to be committed to certain inferences. The phrase 'content of belief' hides the fact that undertaking such a commitment must be distinguished from attributing it (Brandom 1994: 153 ff.). Attributing a belief to a speaker is not just attributing a commitment; the reporter must either undertake the reported commitment himself or claim that the speaker 'should' be committed to certain inferences. Therefore, the words expressed in indirect speech have to make clear the relative commitments of the speaker and the ascriber and their attitudes towards these commitments. "S said that p" should be translated roughly as: "S said something that *in his mouth* committed him to what an assertional utterance of '*p*' *in my mouth now* would commit me to" (Brandom 1994: 538). The aim, or duty, of a good reporter is to show what commitment *should* be undertaken in order to say the 'same thing' of the original speaker according to the judgement of the reporter — in analogy to Davidson's relation of "samesaying". Such an ascription of belief can express the speaker's commitments through wordings that are different from the original wording of the speaker. On the other hand, the most relevant part of the disquotational principle is based on the use of the same *types* of words; therefore, DP cannot be considered, without careful scrutiny, as generally applicable to any utterance.

The problem is this: why, after having established (R), does Kripke apply the disquotational principle to proper names? Kripke is certainly not supposed to assume Millianism in his argument. However, two relevant assumptions, which do not enter directly into the argument of the puzzle, work as background for Kripke's assumptions about the "content" of a belief[5] and, at the same time, for subjecting proper names to DP:

- Proper names are a basic ingredient in forming singular propositions, intended in a Russellian way; therefore the content of belief, or of other propositional attitudes, is given by an ordered pair with an object and a property; in the relevant case <London, ugliness> or <Paderewski, musical talent>.
- Proper names refer rigidly, as indexicals do. But the individuals to which they refer are not bound to change depending on the context of the utterance, as

the individuals referred to by indexicals are. Therefore, proper names behave in ways that differ greatly from the ways indexicals behave.

Brandom makes two points to contrast these two assumptions and to work out a different conception of the "content of a belief":

- Proper names are basic ingredients in forming singular propositions, but singular propositions are taken in a neo-Fregean way as made up of *de re* senses, and not of the objects themselves.
- Proper names, considered as tokens in indirect speech, behave in a way which is very similar to indexicals and other exceptions of the disquotational principle given by Kripke (pronouns and ambiguous names).

In the next sub-sections, I develop these two points, after which I will devote some space to working out the notion of the content of a belief that derives from these analyses.

1.2 Proper names and anaphoric chains

For the first point Brandom merges the concept of anaphora devised by Chastain (1975) with the idea of *de re* senses given by McDowell (1984). Direct reference theories have placed great emphasis on the problem of the word-world relation. Given that any expression, even a definite description, can be used indexically to fix a reference, some special attention has been paid to tokens (utterances given in a context) instead of types. To pick up a significant example, for Burge (1973: 433, 439) "in their most common use proper names involve a demonstrative element"; proper names are not to be considered as individual constants, but as "free variables which represent demonstratives and which receive their interpretation extralinguistically, through the referential actions of language users".

However, in focusing on the indexical aspect of language, no attention has been given to anaphora, for it appears to deal with intralinguistic matters. Brandom's main claim is that anaphora, far from being a mere intralinguistic device, is a necessary ingredient of our referring to objects. The core of the argument for the conceptual priority of anaphora with respect to deixis, is the claim that an indexical is to be considered as an anaphoric initiator. The capacity of pronouns to pick up a reference from an anaphoric antecedent is an essential condition of the capacity of other tokens (which can serve as such antecedents) to have references determined. Deixis presupposes anaphora. No tokens can have the significance of demonstratives unless others have the significance of anaphoric dependents; to use an expression as a demonstrative is to use it as a special kind of anaphoric initiator (cf. Brandom 1994: 462; see also the whole passage, pp. 459–464).

At first, the point seems compatible with our intuitions: we need anaphoric devices in order to be able to re-identify what has been referred to by an indexical: the role of an indexical is to be an anaphoric initiator. When I say, pointing to a man drinking champagne, "He is drunk", I (intend to) refer to somebody, to whom I can refer back later. Thus, when asked for a specification, I say, "I mean that man sitting down on that bench: he is Fred". The anaphoric chain begins with "he" and goes on, picking out the same individual I was referring to with the first utterance of "he". If nobody had any interest in enabling other people to recognize and pick out an individual again, indexicals would be empty and of no use.

But indexicals do not only have the role of anaphoric initiators; they perform also the basic function of connecting general beliefs with contexts. Besides, it is easy to think of occasions in which we use an indexical only once. Therefore, even if it is always *possible* to use the indexical as anaphoric initiator, it is not *necessary* to do so (or at least we might say that it is necessary that it is possible, not that it is necessary tout court). On the contrary, when one uses an anaphora, it is necessary to have an anaphoric initiator, with some indexical element embedded (be it a real indexical or a proper name). Therefore the conclusion that deixis *presupposes* anaphora seems too strong, and should be weakened. An indexical or a demonstrative is an anaphoric initiator plus something special; this "something special" is its deictic aspect. We might say that anaphora and deixis are always to be considered together, without one being conceptually prior to the other. I suppose that this weaker claim is sufficient for the purpose of the argument Brandom gives, and the stronger claim (deixis presupposes anaphora) is not necessary.

The weakening of this claim does not infringe the general argument. The main point of the argument is that the function of indexicals and demonstratives is not exhausted in their unrepeatable occurrence, that is, in their being dependent on the context of utterance; we have to consider the possibility of them being anaphoric initiators. In this case the anaphoric chain has tokens depending not only on the context of utterance, but also on the initiator of the chain and can figure in substitutions. Brandom uses the term "repeatable tokens".[6] Making the passage from unrepeatable tokens to repeatable ones, "anaphoric chains provide the *point* of using demonstratives or indexicals"; as soon as we use demonstratives and indexicals, we are beginning to keep track of an object via a possible anaphoric chain.

Now we might say the following: rigid designation is considered, following Chastain, as a case of a more general feature of language — anaphoric chains. The proper work of anaphora is to make a direct link to the anaphoric initiator, rigidifying it: considered as a general feature of linguistic practice, anaphora reveals a general primitive recurrence structure that is exploited by many kinds of terms (mainly indexicals, proper names and mass terms). Following this generalization,

Brandom takes over from Chastain the idea that most of what has been said in terms of causal chains can be re-framed in terms of anaphoric chains. In fact, causal theories of proper names appear as "dark ways of talking about the sort of anaphoric chains that link tokens of proper names into recurrent structures" (Brandom 1994: 470).

The idea of anaphora and anaphoric chains helps Brandom to give new substance to the idea of *de re* senses as developed by McDowell (1984) and also provides a tool to criticize both direct reference theories and descriptive theories of meaning. McDowell, following Evans, suggests that we have to keep the basic intuition that some thoughts — "singular" thoughts — are dependent on the object the thought is about. This does not mean that the thought must be composed by the individual itself, but that the individual must *figure* in the thought through a peculiar way of its being given, through a "*de re* sense". *De re* senses express the way in which we conceptualize the world. They help us to reject the Cartesian attitude implicit in traditional theories of meaning that worry about the problem of the "link" between language and the world. There is no link to be found because the world is already given in our use of concepts through linguistic learning and linguistic practice.[7]

But *de re* senses have often been considered as an obscure concept. While senses, more or less aptly considered as clusters of definite descriptions, are believed to contribute to a viable theory, a viable theory for *de re* senses seemed to be lacking. Anaphoric chains provide a suitable answer. In indirect speech we deal with tokens of proper names, not with types. Employing an analogy to pronouns and indexicals, tokens of proper names can be understood as elements in an anaphoric chain that is anchored in some name-introducing token. I come in the room and hear "Fred was found drunk in a pub". Even if I have no idea who Fred is, I follow the conversation keeping track of the different occurrences of "Fred" and of other means to refer to him (like "he", "him", or some definite or indefinite descriptions). From then on, I refer to him using the name I have been exposed to as an anaphoric initiator (and I assume that the chain may go further back into the past to the first occurrence of the name "Fred"). The anaphoric chain I am exposed to may be said to be the sense of the proper name — the peculiar way in which a referent is given — a way which is essentially linked to the first use of the name, to the 'reference' of the name. Therefore, contrary to Kripke, while refusing to identify the senses of names with definite descriptions, we still may accept the idea that names have senses and that individual 'thoughts' have as their parts not objects in themselves, but senses or anaphoric chains. Brandom adds the change of perspective from speaker to reporter. The reporter may judge about the correctness of a certain use of anaphoric chains on the side of the speaker; and she, the reporter,

may correct those uses from her perspective by undertaking certain commitments on her own.

1.3 Proper names as "normal" exceptions to the disquotational principle

Given that proper names in indirect speech are tokens which behave in a way similar to indexicals and pronouns, they are easily thought of as candidates for belonging to the set of expressions that "would ruin the intuitive sense" of the disquotational principle and that constitute the relevant exceptions given by Kripke himself in (R). Brandom offers three examples.

(i) *Ambiguity*. In Kripke's example, Arthur uses tokens of the same type, for example: "Cicero" for a spy in World War II and then for the famous Roman orator. We may say — assuming that the famous orator is not a spy — that Arthur believes that Cicero is a spy and that he believes that Cicero is not a spy. In this case we do not have inconsistency because of the ambiguous use of the name "Cicero", where two names referring to different individuals just happen to be of the same type. What is the difference between this and the Paderewski example? The ambiguity of Arthur's case derives from the fact that two co-typical occurrences of a name refer to different individuals; this is also true in the case of Pierre where two co-typical occurrences of a name are considered by him to refer to different individuals. Without contact with any other speakers, Arthur and Pierre cannot tell their cases apart. Both have an identity of lexical type and both have different uses of tokens of the same type. Brandom insists that Kripke does not give any decisive argument to show that the first pair of tokens is ambiguous, while the other is not. The suggestion seems to be that the main reason for ambiguity is not the diversity of references, but the diversity of anaphoric chains attached to co-typical occurrences of proper names. In this concern, Brandom shares Sosa's attitude that the argument from ambiguity is a *petitio principii* on Kripke's part. This is because "if we were to require, for a term to be ambiguous, that it have more than one referent, then (…) we would presuppose Millianism; such a requirement excludes a Fregean position in which a name with a single referent is ambiguous in virtue of having more than one sense. And Kripke's project is precisely to recreate a difficulty without presupposing Millianism".[8]

(ii) *Indexicals*. Proper names and indexicals have always been considered to be the main devices for direct reference. In the view hinted at by McDowell and Brandom, they are still devices for expressing singular thoughts. But the analysis of deixis as a device which is essentially connected to anaphora gives a strong argument for a deeper analogy between indexicals and proper names. Both tokens of indexicals and of proper names are linked in anaphoric chains that represent

the peculiar way in which an object is given to the speaker. Considering tokens of proper names that are both partly context-dependent and organized in anaphoric chains as indexicals may give a reason for excluding them from a generalized application of the disquotational principle.

(iii) *Pronouns*. Brandom quotes Kripke's idea that differences in the beliefs of speakers (different descriptions given by speakers of a language) do not change the reference of a name so long as the speaker "determines that he will use the name with the reference current in the community". Brandom suggests that this idea is like a rough account of what it is to use a pronoun with a certain antecedent. In both cases (proper names and pronouns), taking a token as continuing a chain also commits one to taking the token as inheriting its substitutional-inferential role from the antecedent tokens and as determining the referent by tracing the chain back to the "anaphoric" initiator. Distinct "anaphoric" chains of tokens of "it" may be anchored in antecedents picking out either different objects or the same object. This is exactly what happens in the use of ambiguous proper names (Cicero/Cicero or Paderewski/Paderewski). Given the similarity of the different ways to pick up the referent via a chain (be it anaphoric or causal), the behavior of proper names can be considered analogous to the behavior of pronouns, and, therefore, automatically excluded from the disquotational principle. Brandom notes that, strangely enough, Kripke never considered this possibility, which could lead to the positive conclusion that "one cannot tell simply from the lexical type of an expression whether it is used in such a way that the disquotational principle applies to it" (p. 579).

The examples given by Brandom may be placed in a natural and intuitive progression. First, proper names as tokens may be ambiguous if two tokens refer to the same individual. Then, we may see that, as tokens, they instantiate an anaphoric structure in a way very similar to indexicals; the analogy with pronouns confirms this analysis when we consider cases of the use of "it" which are similar to the case of the ambiguous use of "Paderewski". Therefore the main arguments for excluding proper names from the exceptions of the Disquotational Principle do not work. Proper names are typical cases in which DP cannot be used. With the same strategy we might extend this claim to natural kind terms.

1.4 Conceptual links and the substitutional-inferential stance

Kripke was well aware of the attempts to treat his idea of causal chain as a variant of the Fregean concept of sense; he says that, given that the chain of communication determines the reference, it "might thereby itself be called a 'sense'". In this case, "sense" is "what fixes the reference".[9] The question is not merely terminological. It

concerns differences in metaphysics and epistemology. Speaking of senses as anaphoric chains — and not simply as causal chains, whatever *they* are — is another way to stress the idea that any linguistic connection with the world is conceptually mediated and built up by the interaction of speakers in a community.

Brandom frees Fregean insights from main sources of confusion, for example of Millian 'connotation' and Fregean 'sense' (A. Church) or from Kripke's misunderstanding of a"Fregean view", which allegedly identifies the sense of a name with a set of properties (by which the 'object' should be identified like in definite descriptions).[10] Already Carnap reminds us that a property or a set of properties cannot be considered as a Fregean "sense".[11] Even though Frege sometimes uses definite descriptions as examples of senses, he carefully avoids speaking of senses as properties or concepts.

Moreover, Brandom's definition of "conceptual content" elaborates the Fregean definition of content as inferential role.[12] The conceptual content of a belief, or the content expressed by a corresponding assertion, is given by the inferences (and the substitutions) the speaker is *committed* to and the justifications that *entitle* the speaker to make the assertion. Speaking of conceptual content is therefore speaking of commitments and entitlements. But, according to Brandom, one must take into account differences of undertakings of speakers and hearers as well.

The traditional notion of belief is embedded in an insoluble ambiguity between a narrow, empirical notion and a wide, normative one.[13] The narrow notion links belief to acknowledgment or sincere avowal; the wide one links belief to the consequences of what is held to be true: I believe what I *should* acknowledge when confronted with it through the right chain of reasoning. There may be tensions between these two notions of belief, which give rise to two different sets of beliefs, one closed under the avowal relation, the other closed under a ('somehow objective') consequence relation. People often go back and forth between these two notions of "belief".

What is the content of belief in a normative sense? Brandom's answer equates the (normative) content of belief, roughly, with a commitment to assert certain further sentences or to do certain further things. Part of this commitment is the commitment to make 'the correct substitutions' and to use 'the right items' in *anaphoric* chains. The possibility of using *any* kind of expression as fixing reference, and then as anaphoric initiator, makes the substitution of *non*-co-typical expressions a general phenomenon. Therefore, the substitution of co-typical linguistic items in the expression of our commitments becomes an exception rather than a rule.

To 'know' the conceptual content of a singular term is to be able to deal with correct substitutions. Pierre does not know what he is committed to in using the term "Paderewski" because of an ambiguous use of the name. This is a reason for

not applying the Disquotation Principle. This solves Kripke's puzzle. We may say that Pierre erroneously attaches to the same *type* of name two different sets of inferential commitments which are two different ways to keep track of the one individual, without aknowledging it. We might perhaps consider these ways of keeping track of individuals as similar to the one Evans envisaged in "Understanding demonstratives", where the Fregean concept of sense is equated with a way of keeping track of an object through time. The complication in our case is due to the fact that Pierre keeps track of Paderewski in one way when he uses the term inside one anaphoric chain, while keeping track of him in a different way when he refers to him using a different chain.

To explain what is happening in the puzzle we need to take into account both Pierre's point of view and his commitments relative to substitutions on two different anaphoric chains and our point of view, our commitment to different substitutions. Therefore we cannot attribute to him a contradiction from his point of view. However, a contradiction is apparent when his point of view — his undertakings — is confronted with our commitments and attributions of commitments. Therefore we cannot simply say that he believes that *p* and he believes that *not p* using his commitments which we do not share. We have to make explicit the different commitments and undertakings. The reporter may give not only her point of view on the content of a speaker's belief, but also her point of view on the speaker's point of view. The reporter may express also the claims the speaker *should* be committed to *if* he were in possession of the knowledge available to the reporter. The reporter may undertake a commitment that Paderewski is a musical talent, and attributes to Pierre the commitment to assert, of the *same* individual she is speaking about, that he is not a musical talent (the weak denotational reading given at § 1 as a*). Given that the disagreement is not about the principle of contradiction, an interpreter has all the evidence to interpret the report and to extract from it the relevant information that is to specify the commitments attributed and undertaken by the reporter.[14]

Speaking of Pierre's beliefs we need to take into account his epistemic limitations and the general principles of rational co-tenability[15] of thoughts. Pierre has two thoughts that are about the same individual, but are rationally co-tenable because they express two different anaphoric chains:

> "Pierre believes that the individual linked to the anaphoric initiator x_1, in the context C_1, has musical talent, and Pierre also does not believe that the individual linked to the anaphoric initiator x_2, in context C_2, has musical talent".

This account, supplemented with the relevant information that $x_1 = x_2$, should make it clear that Pierre must update his beliefs. Besides, we might also express his belief, by making his 'real' commitments explicit, *if* he assumed our point of view. Since

there is — beyond his knowledge — a unique individual linked to the two different anaphoric initiators, he would be compelled to recognize a contradiction. Therefore, if one asks "What does Pierre believe?", there is no proper direct and simple answer. We cannot adopt his point of view in reporting his beliefs. Sentences such as "Pierre believes that Paderewski has musical talent and does not believe that Paderewski has musical talent" are no good reports of his belief, because they make us blind to the interplay between the reporter's point of view and his own.

2. Two main problems with Brandom's solution

2.1 What we have achieved

We may summarize Brandom's proposals as follows:

1. In the monolingual case, Kripke's puzzle can be presented without the TP.
2. If (1) holds, then the puzzle is due to the DP alone.
3. But there is no need to use the DP for proper names.
4. If (3) holds, then the puzzle in its original form disappears, or — at least — can be solved with something similar to Fregean senses, i.e., anaphoric chains containing tokens of proper names.
5. This move requires a new definition of content: the content of a belief is defined as commitment to correct substitutions with respect to anaphoric chains.
6. Pierre has therefore two different contents of belief, even if his beliefs are actually connected to the same referent (to the same object of belief).
7. There is no proper rendering of Pierre's contents of beliefs in sentences like "Pierre believes that *p* and not *p*" or in sentences like "Pierre believes that *p* and Pierre does not believe that *p*" because these sentences do not make explicit the different actual undertakings of commitments of different persons with different points of view (speaker and reporter).

Kripke's argument rests on the two principles TP and DP. Where these principles do not apply, the puzzle does not arise. However there are at least two difficulties for Brandom's version of a Fregean answer, even though framed in a new, anaphoric and perspectival setting:

i. The main problem raised by Kripke is that we are stuck in an opaque set of idiolects, where everyone attaches 'her own sense' to any name. This problem applies as well to the idea of sense as anaphoric chains if they are 'arbitrarily attached' to a name. It seems to be a desideratum that senses are 'socialized', that they are something common to a community of speakers.

ii. The TP has been dismissed too easily; if Kripke is right, we should take into account the problem of translating from Pierre's idiolect or language into our idiolect. We have said that Brandom's way out consists in thinking of proper names in analogy with indexicals. By this move, he avoids any mystifying statements about 'our language' or 'our meanings' as identical or non-identical with 'Pierre's language' or 'Pierre's meanings'. Only if we decide to say that Pierre 'has a language different from ours', the problem of translation becomes a necessary ingredient of the picture. The question is Brandom's holism, which seems to make such a decision unavoidable.

In what follows I will not discuss the problem of translation, but I will comment mainly on the first problem and on the difficulties of defining the concept of "content of belief" inside the holistic view suggested by Brandom.

2.2 Socialized senses and idiosyncratic anaphoric chains

Brandom says that anaphoric chains perform the main role Fregean senses are supposed to perform: they are "the way in which objects can be given to us, and they determine the reference of the expressions occurring in them". Fregean senses should also explain socially shared cognitive values of sentences.[16] But unlike any 'ideal notion' of an 'objective' or 'causal chain', anaphoric chains are typically related to individuals, they are even occasional.

A first answer to this challenge could be a 'dual aspect theory of sense', which might save two aspects of our treatment of names: a procedural concept of sense designating the peculiar anaphoric chain that each individual attaches to any object (or, if we want, even his peculiar descriptions); and a "metaphysical" concept of sense where, for instance, names are linked to a unique function from possible worlds to the unique individual to which the name refers.[17]

A second answer could be framed as follows. We might suggest that a single anaphoric chain tracked by just one person does not constitute a sense properly (just as a private language does not constitute a language). An anaphoric chain needs to be embedded in a coherent network of chains.[18] An "idiolectical" sense is accepted as "default", as implying to be embedded in a coherent network of chains, which all converge towards the same anaphoric initiator, therefore to the same individual. If this requirement is not fulfilled, we should not speak of the "sense" of a name, but of a deviant aspect of the intended socially shared sense. This suggestion means that to be a sense of a name is to be part of a shared anaphoric chain. Apparent contradictions, like Pierre's, develop just in case where this social sharing is blocked, and there is a split between a set of socially accepted uses of a name and an idiosyncratic use of it. Properly speaking, there is no idiosyncratic *sense*. Sense

implies a network of anaphoric chains. This is however a "desideratum", which Brandom's holistic attitude can make difficult to attain, because the holistic stance makes it very difficult to have a uniform conception of conceptual content, or of the content of a belief which is exactly the main problem arising from the discussion of Kripke's puzzle.

2.3 How can we share conceptual contents?

As I already have said in Section 1.4, the concept of belief dangles ambiguously between a narrow interpretation (disposition to avowal) and a wide interpretation (commitment to the consequence of what is explicitly avowed). Brandom develops the second notion of the concept of belief, speaking about the structure of a person's commitments with respect to what follows from her assertions. The picture becomes more and more complex when one realizes that "what one takes to follow from what (…) depends on what collateral premises one is committed or entitled to" (Brandom 1994: 587).[19]

We use the same words to express our different commitments; but the inferential content expressed by the same types of words differs from person to person because of the speakers' different collateral commitments. As a result, it is difficult to understand how people could share the same meanings (or conceptual content or pragmatic significance) for the words used, and, therefore, how they could agree or disagree about any matter: the devastating consequence is that mutual understanding and successful communication become unexplainable. How does Brandom face this problem which is a direct consequence of his holistic stance?[20]

The devastating consequence of holism applied to meaning or semantic content depends on the way we think of communication as *sharing* the same content. There are two possible reactions to this problem: one can either reject holism or reject this conception of communication. Most traditional answers are of the first kind: Fodor rejects holism to keep hold of an atomistic conception of meanings and concepts, while Dummett develops molecularism as an intermediate view between holism and atomism. Both answers maintain the idea of communication as the ability to share meanings (be they atomistic concepts or inferential patterns).[21] Davidson and Brandom (1994: 479) develop the other kind of solution: they keep holism and abandon the model of communication as *sharing,* shifting to a different conception of communication as *cooperating* in a joint activity. Nevertheless, Brandom (1994: 590) does not abandon completely the idea of communication as sharing contents: "conceptual contents, paradigmatically propositional ones, *can genuinely be shared* [my italics]". This claim seems to run counter to the proposed alternative for which a theory of communication is not based on sharing

something, but on cooperating on some activity. It is not easy how to understand these apparently contradictory claims. The notion of content of belief or of conceptual content is not always as clearly defined as it should be to clarify the issue.

Actually, the notion of conceptual content has a strange history in the course of the more than 700 pages of Brandom's book. Propositional or conceptual content is based on the tradition of the Fregean distinction between sense and force: different propositional attitudes may have the same *content* (which is to be distinguished from their *object*). Propositional or conceptual contents are conferred through the practice of giving and asking for reasons (Sellars). Therefore, they can be identified with the inferential relations one is committed to, or with the inferential commitments one undertakes in expressing a claim (a belief). Given the difference in collateral commitments, it is nearly impossible that two people 'absolutely' share the same inferential content or the same set of commitments. What does Brandom mean, then, when he speaks of "sharing conceptual contents?" A tentative answer is that sharing conceptual contents does *not* mean "passing something non-perspectival from hand to hand", but "mastering the coordinated system of scorekeeping perspectives" (Brandom 1994:590). Still it is not clear *what* is shared. People do not share their idiosyncratic sets of commitments. And they do not share their different perspectives. Therefore, if it is something that can be shared, the conceptual content cannot be identified with the idiosyncratic set of inferential commitments each person has. We need another notion of content and it seems there are two ways out of the impasse:

(i) We could speak of the conceptual content as the common situation referred to through the different perspectives. The difference in inferential (substitutional) significance does not imply that one interlocutor "cannot strictly be said to understand what another says; it should only be taken to mean that the content they both grasp (…) must be differently specified from different points of view" (Brandom 1994: 590). If the content they both grasp cannot be identified with their respective sets of commitments, it can therefore be identified with the situation they refer to, or with the singular proposition intended in the classical way.[22] But with this answer we are back to the traditional view of the content of belief as the ordered pair of an individual and a property, which was more part of the problem than of the solution. This solution cannot work for Brandom: from the beginning of his project, Brandom has the goal to develop an alternative to the classical idea of content. For him, abstract representations of a singular proposition as 'ordered pairs' are not helpful at all. Certainly, in Brandom's picture, we share a common world, but Pierre's commitments (from his point of view) are different from the commitments undertaken by the reporter. We should therefore say that their beliefs have two different conceptual contents.[23]

(ii) Conceptual content can be defined as the set of speaker's commitments — if we do not forget the perspective(s) of attributing or acknowledging the commitments. To avoid the criticism about idiosyncratic anaphoric chains as foundation of senses, we may think of a continuous conversion towards socialized sense, or common anaphoric chains. But this ideal is far from being clear. A general suggestion given by Brandom is that shared contents may become a result of the interplay of people's commitments, consisting in the "systematic relation among the various pragmatic significances" (p. 591). Content is therefore derived by pragmatic attitudes, abilities to detect other people's commitments. This answer is, however, highly problematic because it does not explain how we could call these systematic relations the "contents" of our beliefs. The question is if this argument supports a more abstract notion of content or voids it of any possibility of systematic treatment.

Brandom seems not to have clearly decided whether the concept of "sharing" is something to be explained or something that belongs to the structure of the explanation. In the first case, we have a theory of communication which has to explain how, through a network of attitudes, we arrive at sharing some common core, be it a singular proposition or a set of inferences; in the second case, the level we share something in our linguistic interaction is what explains our mutual understanding. In what follows I try to clarify the second perspective, which is one possible trend we find in MIE. We may abandon the idea that contents, understood as sets of commitments, are shared. All of us have different perspectives; we share just the idea that there is a difference between what is objectively correct and what is *taken to be* so. Therefore, we do not share conceptual contents, but rather the structure of our treating them as correct or not. What is shared is "the structure, not the content" (Brandom 1994: 600).

This line of thought contradicts some of the previous explicit statements about sharing contents, but looks promising. When Brandom claims that what is shared is "the structure, not the content", he can be understood as giving a general framework consistent with ideas of multi-agent and multi-context theories developed in Cognitive Sciences.[24] From this point of view, we might interpret most of the theories of this kind as if they gave a formal representation of the *basic abilities and strategies* used by agents for navigating in the web of information and beliefs. A formal pragmatics should give a formal representation of common practices such as: switching from one context to another, importing information from other sources, building new conceptual frameworks from given ones, representing inside its own point of view the point of view of other agents. We cannot be said to share meanings — conceptual contents — but it is possible to say that we share these abilities and strategies.

When Brandom stresses the egalitarian attitude towards the different perspectives, this is very well matched in the egalitarian attitude expressed in some multi-agent or multi-context theories.[25] This is reflected by a major point in Brandom's (1994: 601) analysis: there is no ultimate authority and no perspective is privileged in advance: what counts as correct is sorted out by "assessing the comparative authority of competing evidential and inferential claims".

3. Conclusion

As a result, it seems that the tension between the idea of language as an idiolect and language as a social enterprise remains unresolved in Brandom's analysis. Perhaps this has to do with the opposed influences of Davidson and Dummett on his general theory of language. The consequence is that Brandom's concept of conceptual content oscillates between different meanings of "sharing": as something we reach at the end of the process of communication, on the one hand, and as something presupposed for the communication to work, on the other. Maybe there is a way to reconcile the contrast between the idea of "sharing the structure and not the content" with the idea of explaining how we can reach a point where we share conceptual contents understood as sets of commitments. The shared strategies we use for navigating among commitments can be considered as the backbone of the activity by which, checking our relative commitments, we *converge* towards *common* inferences and commitments.

What does it mean to share common inferences as the result of this process of communication? Again, I have two answers: (i) a general suggestion derives from the idea of concepts "whose properties of use outrun the dispositions of the speaker to apply them" (Brandom 1994: 636). These properties of use become standards and we may describe communication as the process in which speakers bind themselves to such standards. We have therefore a "binding requirement", built upon general strategies of communication, which impose a structure on admissible conceptual contents; (ii) we may not insist that in order to share a conceptual content there must be a set of commitments or inferences that speakers have to share. On the contrary, we should simply demand that speakers have to share *some* commitments or inferences they get to share in local context, through basic commonly shared abilities in linguistic interaction.

This last suggestion gives a reasonable definition of content understanding: a person understands a conceptual content if she understands some of its (plausible, relevant, and easy) inferential relations. This is, however, a form of 'molecularism' or local holism[26] which rejects the strongest versions of holism of conceptual con-

tent and implies that a speaker's meaning does not coincide with the totality of his beliefs and commitments. This idea seems to match some ideas in Brandom's work, as when he claims that the "grasp of concepts" as mastery of inferential roles "does not mean that an individual must be disposed to …endorse in practice all the right inferences involving it (…) to be in the game at all, one must make enough of the right moves — but how much is enough is quite flexible" (p. 636). Eventually this line of thought could lead to the idea of common content considered not as something shared by every member of the society, but as generally accepted norms towards which all people *should* conform and do conform when properly guided. However, accepting this step should require a definite and well argued alternative to the strong form of holism Brandom seems to defend.

Notes

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1. Santambrogio (2002) claims that Pierre's language is not the same as ours: "suppose it were otherwise. In our language the relevant identity 'Paderewski=Paderewski" has the form a=a. Obviously, Peter must be taking it as of the form a=b, for he thinks that there are two distinct, though homophonous, names involved in it". Given that there is no mistake in syntactic structure, "we must conclude that his language is distinct from our own. Some translation is thus needed". As a general conclusion Santambrogio suggests that "every belief ascription is…couched in some language…and that more than one language is involved in the paradoxical cases. The first thing that the paradox urges to so is to make explicit which language we are using. (…) Stepping out of our language and into Pierre's own, therefore, amounts to adopting a viewpoint which was simply not available before". As we shall see, Brandom's attempt is to reach a similar result (adopting a viewpoint not available before) without facing the problem of translation.

2. Brandom gives his general solution to the puzzle in one sentence, rendering *both* the point of view of the reporter and of the speaker. It is however not clear that this is a proper reading of (a); in fact we risk to miss *Pierre's* claim that Paderewski has musical talent. There is something tricky here. In the first part of his paper, Kripke (1979) himself recognizes that some problems are solved with *de re* readings, and explicitly directs his concerns to *de dicto* readings. However Brandom, following Lewis (1981), attempts to avoid an all too schematic disjunction here and uses a third possibility: "*weak denotational de re reading*".

3. Burge (1982) claims that the Weak Disquotational Principle is "absurd".

4. Davidson makes use of the puzzle, dividing the meaning component (truth theory) from the belief component of his overall account of language. In the belief component there must be a belief that "London is not Londres", while in the truth theory we have "'London' refers to London" and "'Londres' refers to London" and, apparently "London = Londres". But the truth theory has nothing to do with the psychological explanation and does not represent the beliefs of the speakers, but the truth conditions of sentences. See Bilgrami (1992: 178–179).

5. At the end of his paper, Kripke speaks of the "cloud" the paradox places over the notion of "content"; this cloud seems –at least from Brandom's point of view — to be placed mainly on the idea of a singular proposition, as defined by the assumptions under discussion.

6. The idea of "repeatable token" is counter-intuitive. However, think of a sentence written on a piece of paper — like "I'll come back soon" — which can be used at different occasions; it is a token used different times. It is therefore repeatable. In contrast to a token used at a peculiar occasion, an anaphoric chain can be said to consist of tokens which can be repeated as such, without changing reference.

7. McDowell (1986, 1994).

8. Sosa (1996: 391). Sosa tries a radical diversion claiming that Kripke's puzzle does not derive directly from the disquotational principle, but rather from a hidden principle presupposed by Kripke as a central principle in giving a logic of belief. Sosa calls this the "Hermeneutic Principle" [H]: "If a name in ordinary language has a single referent then it may correctly be represented logically by a single constant". The principle expresses the idea that an "unambiguous" name is a name that has a single referent and can be represented by a single logical constant. Kripke's arguments are valid only if we assume "that an agent has contradictory beliefs if and only if the agent has beliefs whose contents can be represented formally as Fa and ¬ Fa", an assumption which clearly goes on well with the principle [H] (p. 388). A theory that allows a proper name to have a meaning which is not exhausted by the reference will deny the validity of [H]; on the other hand, the only justification for [H] is the Mill theory. Therefore Kripke's puzzle can be seen as a *reductio ad absurdum* of [H] and therefore of Mill's theory of proper names. Sosa claims that his answer might be translated into an answer that "rejects the *applicability* of the principle of disquotation" (p.394). If that is true, Sosa's position resembles Brandom's. No clear explanation is given, however, of what kind of theory would be a theory which allows a proper name to have a meaning which is not exhausted by its reference and which passes Kripke's tests against description theories of proper names.

9. See Kripke (1979: 388 and n. 20). Kaplan (1977: n. 78) said that the causal chain might "constitute a kind of meaning for proper names that is analogous to character for indexicals" (but names would have all the same character).

10. The first to point out the confusion of *connotation* and *sense* in Kripke has been Wiggins (1980). Actually, Kripke (1975 n 11) speaks exactly in terms of "connotation", saying that there is no "conventional community-wide 'connotation'" which tells, say, "Tully" from "Cicero". For the point of view of Kripke, see Kripke (1979: 384–385, n. 10 and 43). Dummett reacted to the criticism of sense as what_gives_the_meaning insisting that Frege never intended "sense" as what fixes meaning (it is apparent that sense is not linguistic meaning, given that "today" and "yesterday" — which have apparently different meanings — may have for Frege the same sense if uttered in an appropriate context).

11. See Carnap (1947: §29.2). Carnap followed Frege's lectures in 1910–1913. Brandom (1994: 582) remarks that Frege considered properties (concepts) as belonging to the realm of sense.

12. See Brandom (1994: 93–94). Frege (1879: §3); see also Penco (2003) on the definition of sense as inferential potential as one of the many definitions of sense in Frege.

13. This central point in Brandom (1994) is discussed on pages 507–508, wherefrom I quote. The main discussion, which gives a definition of the second notion of belief is given in Chapter 4 (pp. 201ff) and Chapter 3 (pp.159ff). This distinction is basic in recent developments in the logic of belief; we might see an analogy in the distinction between implicit and explicit beliefs (Levesque 1984), which is at the root of recent systems of epistemic logic such as Fagin, Halpern, et al. (1995).

14. We may find different ways to treat this interplay of points of view formally: (i) a general suggestion is to use some form of *quantifying out*, like: "Pierre believes that there is an *x* who has no musical talent and the Reporter believes that *he* has musical talent". (ii) Kamp (1990) makes two suggestions in the context of Discourse Representation Theory (DRS): (a) the distinction between *external anchors* (given by a pair of a discourse referent and an object assumed as existent) and *internal anchors* (which *purport* to represent an object, but do not make existential assumptions) (b) the idea of *internal links* as a means to make the anchor of one person available to the other. In our DRS the same external anchor has a link to two different internal anchors in the DRS of Pierre. (iii) Edelberg (1991) has proposed using counterparts to making the jump from one point of view to the other; Paderewski1 and Paderewski2 would be two different counterparts of Paderewski as intended by the theory of the reporter. However, even these strategies are an over-simplification. The main problem of a formal treatment, if we wanted to follow Brandom's analysis of scorekeeping, would be to give the interplay of *three* different points of view: the speaker, the reporter and the interpreter (normally called "we" in philosophical papers, and too easily identified with the reporter).

15. See Sainsbury (1998), who develops the idea of Evans' principle of the intuitive difference of thoughts.

16. The point is apparent in the Hesperus-Phosphorus case, as Kripke (1979) remarks, because we are in front of a convention. But the possibility for each speaker to attach her individual sense to a name makes it difficult to obtain "a requisite socialized notion of sense". The point is that the anaphoric stance does not avoid the problem, but is appear to make it even more difficult to solve.

17. This would be coherent with the idea of a double aspect in the Fregean conception of sense, discussed in Penco (2003).

18. This suggestion is compatible with a revision of Devitt's (1996) proposal. For Devitt the sense of a name is the property of being in a particular network of denotational chains. Devitt requires the same phono/graphemic type, a requirement which can be abandoned (suggestion by Stephen Barker).

19. Following Quine's holistic picture, Brandom's collateral commitments can be considered as analogous to Quine's auxiliary hypotheses.

20. Brandom's holism is a reaction against atomism: "one must have many concepts in order to have any. For grasping a concept involves mastering the properties of inferential moves that connect it to many other concepts… One cannot have just one concept. This holism about concepts contrasts with the atomism that would result if one identified concepts with different responsive dispositions" (Brandom 1994: 89). The traditional criticism of holism hinted at in the text has been made first by Dummett (1973) and taken over by Fodor and Lepore (1992).

21. For a recent assessment of these positions against holism, see Fodor (1998) and Dummett (1991).

22. It looks as if Brandom's theory, if so interpreted, would be a variant of Schiffer's hidden indexical theory where a "Kaplan" content is connected with a hidden indexical. After all, Kaplan's contents, like Carnap's intensions, can be represented as something that can be considered from different points of view (different characters or different intensional structures). Schiffer (1992) holds that belief is a relation between a speaker, an (indexical) mode of presentation and a structured "Kaplan" proposition. The difference between this and Brandom is that Brandom's anaphoric modes of presentation fill a gap which is not considered in the list of different interpretations of modes of presentations given by Schiffer; therefore, it is a challenge to Schiffer's solution.

23. When Brandom (1994: 590) claims that "the content both speaker and hearer grasp (…) must be differently specified from different points of view," this seems to imply just that Pierre and the reporter refer to the same individual, but does *not* imply that Pierre and the reporter have the same sets of substitutional commitments — properly intended as contents of belief.

24. I think, firt of all, of the works developed after the seminal work by McCarthy (1993). A more developed approach can be found in Beneceretti, Bouquet, and Ghidini (2000) and Guha and McCarthy (2003).These papers give a new perspective to the multi-context theories, looking for a general format of the strategies with which we navigate through contexts.

25. The basic idea is that we may build multi-contexts systems where each context is taken as a theory with no upper context, nor a strict hierarchical order among contexts. See, for example, Giunchiglia et al. (1998) on a multi-context representation of beliefs of limited agents. See also Penco (2001) on the relationship between multi-contexts theories and holism.

26. I refer here to the weak molecularism as developed by Perry (1994) or Marconi (1997). The standard difference between strong molecularism and weak molecularism is typically presented as the difference between $\forall$p Eq (q $\neq$ p & Nec (p is shared $\rightarrow$ q is shared)) [strong molecularism] and $\forall$p Nec (p is shared $\rightarrow$ Eq (q $\neq$ p & q is shared) [weak molecularism: to have proper communication it is necessary that some semantic property is shared, without having decided which a priori or in advance]. On local holism see Penco (2001, 2004).

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Scorekeeping in a defective language game*

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One common criticism of deflationism is that it does not have the resources to explain defective discourse (e.g., vagueness, referential indeterminacy, confusion, etc.). This problem is especially pressing for someone like Robert Brandom, who not only endorses deflationist accounts of truth, reference, and predication, but also refuses to use representational relations to explain content and propositional attitudes. To address this problem, I suggest that Brandom should explain defective discourse in terms of what it is to treat some portion of discourse as defective. To illustrate this strategy, I present an extension of his theory of content and use it to provide an explanation of confusion. The result is a theory of confusion based on Joseph Camp's recent treatment. The extension of Brandom's theory of content involves additions to his account of scorekeeping that allow members of a discursive practice to accept different standards of inferential correctness.

Keywords: Borderline cases, confusion, default and challenge, indeterminacy, inferential standard, semantic position, scorekeeping commitments, vagueness.

1. Introduction: Deflationism and defective discourse

Defective discourse poses problems for broadly deflationist accounts of language. I will pause here to admit that I do not have a good definition of 'defective discourse'. However, I can provide some examples of it: vagueness, ambiguity, confusion (in a technical sense to be explained below), category mistakes, presupposition failure, and reference failure.[1] I should say that I am not using 'defective' in the pejorative sense; these uses of language are defective in the sense that they differ from what many philosophers have taken to be the way language ought to work.

By 'broadly deflationist accounts of language', I have in mind explanations of paradigmatically semantic phenomena (e.g., truth, meaning, reference, predication, quantification, validity, etc.) that do not accord relations between linguistic entities (e.g. sentences, propositions, subsentential expressions, etc.) and non-linguistic entities (e.g., objects, states of affairs, facts, "reality", "the world", etc.)

explanatory roles. For example, deflationist theories of truth do not employ a notion of correspondence between truth bearers and truth makers. Some employ the Tarski equivalences (e.g., "the cat is on the mat' is true' is equivalent to 'the cat is on the mat') as implicit definitions of 'true' and include a "That's all folks" claim to the effect that there is nothing more to the concept of truth than these equivalences; others use anaphoric relations to account for the use of 'true'.[2] For the rest of the paper I will use the term *linguistic deflationism* as a general term for theories of semantic phenomena that eschew representational relations as explanatory primitives. I should emphasize that my definition of 'linguistic deflationism' is stipulative. Many people who call themselves deflationists would reject linguistic deflationism. I use it because I aim to show that even this doctrine has the resources to explain defective discourse.

One might wonder *why* defective discourse poses a problem for deflationary accounts and not for ones that are more traditional. The reason is that, on a traditional (i.e., non-deflationary) account of language, our expressions correspond to worldly things. Our sentences mean what they do and have the truth values they do because of the way their components "hook onto" the world. A relation (often called *reference*) links each "normal" singular term to an object in the world and a relation (often called *denotation*) links each "normal" predicate to a set of objects in the world. On this traditional account, one explains defective discourse in terms of nonstandard relations between linguistic entities and the world. For example, its seems that there are some objects (e.g., people who have some hair but not much) such that vague predicates (e.g., 'bald') are neither true of nor not true of them. According to the traditional account, vagueness can be explained in terms of a nonstandard relation that partitions the world of objects into those that do fall under the predicate in question, those that do not, and those that are borderline cases.

Deflationists cannot accept the same strategy because they cannot explain vagueness in terms of the relations between vague predicates and objects. Thus, one problem for the linguistic deflationist is to account for defective discourse (vagueness in this example) in some other way. A deeper problem for linguistic deflationists is that the traditional picture of language is so ingrained that the various types of defective discourse have come to be defined in terms of nonstandard relations between linguistic and non-linguistic entities. Thus, it can seem that a linguistic deflationist cannot characterize defective discourse at all. It is quite difficult to save the phenomena if one cannot even identify what needs to be saved.

The literature on these two problems is rather patchy. Deflationism came to prominence as a doctrine about truth and has since spread (slowly) to other debates about language. Accordingly, most of the debates about deflationism and defective discourse center around whether deflationism about truth (which I will call

aletheic deflationism) can account for the types of defective discourse that pertain to truth. One debate worth mentioning is whether aletheic deflationism is compatible with nonfactualism in general and expressivism in particular (cf. Blackburn 1998). Another issue is whether aletheic deflationism is compatible with various prominent approaches to the semantic paradoxes (cf. Simmons 1999). An example from outside the debates surrounding truth is Anil Gupta's (1999) argument that conceptual role theories of meaning (which count as a type of linguistic deflationism) cannot explain expressions governed by inconsistent or incompatible rules. Of particular importance are Hartry Field's writings on referential indeterminacy (where one cannot assign a unique representational relation to some singular term or predicate). He is one of the few aletheic deflationists to address the problems posed by defective discourse (Field 2001: ch. 6–10; cf. Leeds 2000).

If linguistic deflationism is to be a tenable doctrine, it must be able to explain both the difference between normal and defective discourse in general, and the various types of defective discourse in particular. As a linguistic deflationist, Robert Brandom faces these challenges. One of the goals of this paper is to present a general strategy he can use to address them. Demonstrating this claim for each type of defective discourse is beyond the scope of this paper. Instead, I show how he can explain one type of defective discourse: confusion.

The rest of this paper contains three main sections. In section two, I discuss Brandom's deflationist theory of content in *Making it Explicit*, which consists of a semantic theory and a pragmatic theory. My discussion focuses on the account of scorekeeping that figures at the center of his pragmatic theory. I pose some questions, present a few complaints, and propose a couple of additions. Section three concentrates on Joseph Camp's theory of confusion. Section four links the discussion of confusion in section three with Brandom's account of scorekeeping presented in section two. The goal of section four is to provide an outline of the pragmatics of confusion. To do so, I suggest an extension of Brandom's theory of content that allows members of a discursive practice to endorse different standards of inferential correctness. This extension explains how participants in a scorekeeping practice can change the way they keep score and it explains these changes in terms of the scorekeeping practice itself. My thesis is that this extension allows Brandom to give a deflationary account of confusion.

2. Brandom's linguistic deflationism

I first want to clarify the sense in which Brandom's account of language is deflationist. Brandom contrasts his overall explanatory strategy with the dominant

one in philosophy of language and mind, which takes representational relations between linguistic items and worldly items as primitives. It explains content, truth, and inference in terms of these relations. By contrast, Brandom takes inference as a primitive in his semantic theory and uses it to generate an account of content, truth, and representation. At no point does he employ relations between linguistic entities and worldly entities to explain the way language works. His theories of truth, reference, and predication are all deflationist; truth conditions play no role in his theory of content. Furthermore, he does not smuggle in representational relations in the form of intentional vocabulary because he explains all of it in inferential terms as well. Thus, if anyone faces the problems posed by defective discourse, he does.

2.1 Brandom's theory of content

The heart of *Making it Explicit* is a theory of discursive practice. We are all familiar with discursive practices, for they are the practices in which participants behave in a way that is sufficient to confer content on some of their performances, mental states, and products. Although 'content' could use a sharp definition, I am not going to provide one. Suffice it to say that 'content' is used in a way that is similar to the way 'meaning' is used, except that where 'meaning' applies to linguistic entities alone, 'content' applies to mental ones as well (e.g. mental states, attitudes, etc.).

Brandom divides his theory of content into two parts: semantics and pragmatics. One of his fundamental commitments is that one should explain the former in terms of the latter, which is a descendent of the view that meaning should be explained in terms of use. Thus, semantic phenomena (content, truth, reference, validity) are explained in terms of the way the things that bear content are used (Brandom 1994: ch. 1–2).

I will address Brandom's semantic theories and pragmatic theories in turn. His semantic theory belongs to a family called *conceptual role semantics*. Members of this family explain meaning or content in terms of the conceptual role of the thing that bears the meaning or content. Brandom's version takes the conceptual role of a content-bearer to be its role in inference. He takes the primary content-bearers to be sentence tokens and the primary notion of inference to be material inference, which is a relation between two content-bearers that holds (in part) because of the content they bear (as opposed to formal inference which holds because of the form of the content-bearers). Thus, the content of a sentence token is its inferential role.

Brandom distinguishes between three types of inferential relations: commissive, permissive, and incompatibility (I will explain these terms when I turn to his

pragmatic theory). Accordingly, the inferential role of a sentence has three parts — one for each of the inferential relations in which it participates. We can think of the incompatibility role as a set of ordered pairs of sentences that are incompatible. The commissive and permissive parts can each be thought of as sets of inferential antecedents and inferential consequents. The antecedents of a sentence are the sentences from which one can infer the sentence in question (let us call it *p*) and the consequents are the sentences that one can infer from it. The antecedents of *p* form a set whose members are sets of sentences from which *p* follows. The consequents of *p* form a set of ordered n-tuples. The first member of each n-tuple is a sentence that follows from *p* and the other members of each n-tuple are the premises besides *p* needed to derive the first member. Thus, the inferential role of a sentence *p*, will be: {*p*'s commissive antecedents, *p*'s commissive consequents, *p*'s permissive antecedents, *p*'s permissive consequents, *p*'s incompatibilities}. The inferential role of a sentence depends on both which sentences are available to serve as auxiliary premises and which inferences are correct. Brandom assumes that each member of a discursive practice takes everyone else to agree on the latter (Brandom 1994: ch. 2). (I will reject this assumption in section four.)

Brandom's pragmatic theory takes as primitives the notions of *deontic status* and *deontic attitude*. Statuses come in two flavors: *commitments* and *entitlements*. The former are similar to responsibilities and the latter are similar to permissions. There are three types of attitudes: *attributing*, *undertaking*, and *acknowledging*. One may attribute, undertake, and acknowledge various commitments and entitlements.

There are several different kinds of commitments that correspond to aspects of discursive practice. *Doxastic commitments* correspond to assertions and beliefs, *inferential commitments* correspond to reasons, and *practical commitments* correspond to actions. The members of a discursive practice keep track of each other's commitments and entitlements. Brandom adopts Lewis's (1979) explanation of this behavior in terms of scorekeeping. At a given moment in a conversation, the score is just the commitments and entitlements associated with each participant. Each member of the conversation keeps score on all the participants (including herself). Every time one of the participants undertakes (implicitly adopts), acknowledges (explicitly adopts), or attributes (takes another as if he adopts) a commitment or entitlement, it changes the score. I will refer to these as *scorekeeping actions*.

Brandom bases his pragmatic theory on the idea that the use of a linguistic item is the way it changes the score of a conversation. Because Brandom emphasizes the normative dimension of content, he defines the *pragmatic significance* of a sentence as the way it *should* affect the score of a conversation in which someone utters it. Pragmatic significance has two aspects — the circumstances of application and the

consequences of application. The former consists of the scores of conversations in which it is legitimate to utter the sentence in question. The latter is the scores that should result from a legitimate utterance of it (Brandom 1994: 180–198).

There are two important senses in which Brandom's semantics answers to his pragmatics. First, the inferences that constitute the content of a sentence are explained in terms of commitments and entitlements. A *commissive inference* is one for which if one is committed to its premises, then one should be committed to its conclusion as well. If one is entitled to the premises of a *permissive inference*, then one should be entitled to its conclusion too. Two sentences are *incompatible* if commitment to one precludes entitlement to the other. The participants of an inferential practice acknowledge inferential commitments by using some sentences as reasons for others. Second, given the force of an utterance, the content of the sentence uttered determines its pragmatic significance. That is, once the members of a discursive practice determine that a given utterance has a certain force, they can use the content of the sentence uttered (its inferential role) to determine how it should change the score of the conversation (its pragmatic significance).

For Brandom, the paradigmatic use of a sentence is an assertion. Consequently, his model of discursive practice is one in which the members make various assertions. He assumes that this model can be extended to include all the other types of speech acts. When a person makes an assertion, she sets off a chain reaction of scorekeeping actions by each member of the conversation. Three important features of assertions govern these scorekeeping actions. First, when someone makes an assertion, she acknowledges a doxastic commitment. She also undertakes all the commitments and entitlements that follow from the one acknowledged. Second, a successful assertion (i.e., one in which the asserter is entitled to the commitment acknowledged) entitles other members of the conversation to undertake the same commitment. Successful assertions present commitments for public consumption. Third, the asserter takes responsibility to justify the assertion by giving reasons for it should the need arise. In general, assertion displays a *default and challenge structure* in which many assertions carry default entitlement that another member of the conversation can challenge (Brandom 1994: 167–179).

2.2 Scorekeeping example

In this subsection, I describe a conversation in which three people keep score on one another according to Brandom's (1994: 190–191) pragmatic theory. Assume that there are three people, A, B, and C. We can think of the score at any given moment as a set whose members are sets of commitments and entitlements. A number of complications arise immediately. Because each member of the conversation will

have different beliefs, they will have to keep a separate score on each participant. Further, Brandom's pragmatics distinguishes between three different attitudes: attributing, undertaking, and acknowledging. Each scorekeeper must separate the commitments and entitlements associated with every other participant into those undertaken and those acknowledged. (A scorekeeper does not make this distinction for herself because it only makes sense for commitments she has attributed to others.) Thus, a set of ten sets represents the score kept by each member of our three-person conversation. For example, for B the score is: {{B's commitments acknowledged}, {B's entitlements acknowledged}, {A's commitments acknowledged}, {A's commitments undertaken}, {A's entitlements acknowledged}, {A's entitlements undertaken}, {C's commitments acknowledged}, {C's commitments undertaken}, {C's entitlements acknowledged}, {C's entitlements undertaken}}.

Assume that A utters a sentence token, *p*. Assume also that B determines that A's utterance has the force of an assertion, and that B understands *p* (i.e., B knows its content). B must first attribute a doxastic commitment to A (which goes under A's commitments acknowledged). I will use '*p*' both as a name for the sentence A asserted and as a name for the commitment A acknowledges by making the assertion (I will discuss this convention in the next subsection). Next, B attributes to A all of the commitments that are commissive consequences of *p* together with the rest of A's commitments (these will go under A's commitments undertaken). That is, the commitments that follow from *p* by commissive inferences (according to B) will depend on what other commitments B takes A to have undertaken and acknowledged. B must then perform an incompatibility check on A's commitments. If B finds any incompatibilities then he must subtract entitlement from the incompatible commitments. B must then attribute entitlements to A's commitments that follow by commissive inferences from the commitments B takes A to be entitled to. During this process, B must continue to perform incompatibility checks to make sure that he does not attribute entitlements to two incompatible commitments.

B's next step is to attribute entitlements to A's commitments that follow by permissive inferences. That is, B looks at the commitments he takes A to be entitled to, he figures out which commitments follow from these by permissive inferences, and he attributes entitlement to these commitments (which go under A's entitlements undertaken). It is important to note that B might take A to be entitled to commitments that A has not undertaken. In other words, B might place on the list of A's entitlements undertaken, entitlements to commitments that B has not placed on A's list of commitments undertaken. For example, A might have uttered 'the barometer is falling and the sky is getting cloudy'. Then, once it comes to the step currently under consideration, B might attribute to A an entitlement to the commitment associated with 'it will rain soon' even though B does not attribute

this commitment to A. If the latter commitment does not follow by commissive inferences from something A has said (so the commitment is not one she has undertaken), but it does follow by permissive inferences (so she has undertaken entitlement to it), then this situation will occur.

Finally, B must evaluate A's entitlement to *p*. A can come to be entitled to *p* in a number of different ways. First, A might have default entitlement to *p*. This can occur when A asserts *p* as an observation report of something for which A is a reliable reporter. One can be default entitled to a claim that is just "obvious" in some sense (e.g., 'monkeys do not grow on trees'). Second, A might be entitled to *p* because *p* follows by commissive inferences or permissive inferences from other commitments to which A is entitled. Third, A might be entitled to *p* as testimony. That is, A might acknowledge *p* because she has attributed the commitment associated with it and entitlement to that commitment to someone else, from whom she inherits it by testimony. If B decides that A is entitled to *p*, then B attributes an entitlement to A (which might go under either of the lists of A's entitlements depending on how A came to be entitled to *p*). B then takes himself and the other members of the conversation (C in my example) to be free to acknowledge the same commitment and, if one of them does, he or she will then inherit the entitlement to it as testimony. However, if B decides that A is not entitled to *p*, then he can either stop scorekeeping and wait for the next assertion to be made or he can challenge A's assertion. We could, of course continue with the example but I want to make some comments and raise some questions.

2.3 Comments on the scorekeeping example

This example demonstrates how the content of a sentence-token determines its pragmatic significance. That is, the inferential role of a sentence-token determines the way it should change the score of the conversation in which one utters it. In the example, A consults the commissive inferences, permissive inferences, and incompatibilities that link *p* to the other sentence tokens of the language (*p*'s content) in order to determine which commitments and entitlements should be attributed, acknowledged, and undertaken by the participants of the conversation (*p*'s pragmatic significance).

I want to discuss both the first step of the process in which B attributes a commitment to A, and my use of '*p*' as a name of both a sentence and a commitment. Brandom's explanation of the first step is: "To begin with, [B] must add *p* to the list of commitments attributed to [A]" (Brandom 1994: 190). What exactly does B add to the list? Is it a sentence token? If so, then in what sense is the list to which it is added a list of commitments? Here is what I take to be the answers to these

questions (although I am not certain of them), which are somewhat Davidsonian in spirit.[3] The actors in this example are not actually adding anything to a list. There is no list. At least there is no list that the participants alter. The participants in the example neither explicitly nor implicitly add commitments to lists. *We*, the theorists who are trying to get a better understanding of what it is the participants are doing when they engage in conversation, keep the list. We have a list of the commitments A has undertaken; or, better, we have a list of the commitments B has attributed to A. We keep the list and pretend that B is keeping it. The list consists of sentence tokens (in some hypothetical sense, because I am not actually keeping such a list and I doubt you, the reader, are either). Thus, when Brandom says that B adds *p* to a list of commitments, what he means is that we, the theorists, in an attempt to understand what B and A are doing, keep a hypothetical list of the commitments B has attributed to A, and we hypothetically write the sentence token corresponding to the one A uttered on this list, and we pretend that B did this. In other words, we, the theorists, are keeping score on them, and by doing so are treating them as scorekeepers so that we can better understand what it is to be a scorekeeper.

How does B figure out that A's utterance is an assertion? What is it for B to understand *p*? How does B know which commitment to attribute to A? These are difficult questions and Brandom must be careful if he is to provide convincing answers to them. He cannot just assume a notion of content from the start if his scorekeeping pragmatics is to ultimately explain what content is. It seems to me that Brandom's account of perception might be able to answer the first question and possibly the second by providing an account of what it is to be a reliable reporter of speech acts and contents. An answer to the second question will also require an account of *scorekeeping invitations*. That is, B understands the sentence A uttered if he takes A's performance to be an invitation to keep score on her. Whether B *correctly* understands the sentence A uttered will be a matter of what constitutes successful communication — an issue that I cannot take up here (cf. Scharp 2003). I assume that an answer to the third question would be that, barring any evidence to the contrary, B would pick the commitment that he would acknowledge if he were to assert *p*. However, if he has reason to believe that he and A understand *p* differently, he will have to pick a commitment that he would acknowledge if he were to assert a sentence of his language whose inferential role is sufficiently similar to what he takes to be the inferential role of *p* for A. I know of no good way to say what 'sufficiently similar' means here because it will depend on the context and the intentions of those involved.

I should note that this example illustrates only the basic model of discursive practice. Brandom extends it in several different ways. He accounts for the

commitments undertaken and acknowledged in perception by explaining perceptual reliability in terms of a special kind of inference. To account for action, Brandom introduces *practical commitments*, which are involved in inferences and can have entitlement associated with them. He treats actions as acknowledgments of practical commitments and presents a rudimentary action theory in terms of this idea. He uses a notion of *substitution* to extend his account of inferential role from sentences to subsentential expressions and a notion of *recurrence* to extend it from subsentential expressions to context-sensitive performances. Brandom (1994: ch. 4, 6 and 7) also introduces scorekeeping actions to account for all of these subsentential semantic phenomena. In this paper, I can deal only with the sentential level.

3. Camp's theory of confusion

In this section, I discuss the phenomenon of confusion, which will serve as my example of defective discourse. I have purposely avoided defining 'confusion' because one of the issues at stake in this paper is whether a deflationist can say what defective discourse consists in without invoking relations between language and the world. To give the reader some idea of what I am talking about, I can say that a person is *confused* if he thinks that there is one thing when really there are two (or more). The things in question can be objects, properties, concepts, propositions, etc. This rough definition takes 'is confused' to apply to people. I will also apply it to expressions, sentences, and arguments. An expression is confused if, by virtue of using it, a person counts as confused. A confused sentence is one that contains a confused expression; a confused argument is one that contains a confused sentence.

Camp (2002) considers a person, Fred, who dumps some ants into an ant farm. Although Fred sees one large ant go into the cage, he misses a second one. Fred then decides to use 'Charlie' as a name for what he takes to be the only big ant in the ant farm. Fred does not know that there are two ants in the ant farm and, due to some fact about large ant behavior, they are never visible together. To help clarify matters, it will be helpful for us to have the names 'Ant A' and 'Ant B' for the two big ants in the ant farm. One can characterize Fred's confusion by uttering 'Fred has confused ant A with ant B', or 'Fred thinks that ant A is ant B' (Camp 2002: 27–29).

Camp argues for several conditions on theories of confusion. First, confusion should not be explained in terms of false belief; the fact that Fred is confused is not a matter of his having false beliefs of any kind. Second, a theory of confusion should be compatible with a policy of *inferential charity*. Although, due to his confusion, many of Fred's arguments concerning the denizens of the ant farm will appear unsound, we must not treat him as if he is poor at logic. His

reasoning skills did not change when he purchased the ant farm and dumped the ants into it. We should not evaluate his inferences according to a standard that interprets him as committing basic logical errors. A consequence of the demand for inferential charity is that confusion is distinct from ambiguity. There is no inferentially charitable way to treat Fred's use of 'Charlie' as ambiguous. Another consequence is that one must refrain from attributing truth values to Fred's confused sentences if one is to be inferentially charitable. Every scheme for attributing truth values to Fred's confused sentences will somehow treat Fred as if he is poor at assessing the weight of evidence (Camp 2002: 31–36, 38–46, 49–54, and 71–78, respectively).

In accordance with the policy of inferential charity, Camp explains confusion in terms of adopting semantic positions. When another person, Ginger for example, utters 'Fred thinks that ant A is ant B', she is not attributing some mental state to Fred. Instead, she adopts a semantic position toward Fred and his confused sentences. When Ginger adopts a semantic position toward Fred, she alters her standards of inference; she decides to be inferentially charitable to Fred in a certain way. Characterizing the sense in which Ginger decides to be inferentially charitable will provide a theory of confusion.

Camp advocates a particular logic by which one should evaluate the inferences of the confused. Because Camp argues that truth values are inappropriate for confused sentences, he must present an inferential standard by which one can evaluate a confused person's inferences that does not define validity in terms of truth preservation. Instead, he defines validity in terms of profitability preservation. In particular, an inference involving confused sentences is valid if and only if it preserves profitability, where a sentence is profitable if and only if believing it will contribute to the achievement of one of the believer's goals (Camp 2002: 122–124).

Camp uses Belnap's (1992) useful four-valued logic to track profitability. This logic uses four semantic values: Y, N, ?, and Y&N. Camp uses a story about two people, Sal and Sam, who are authorities on the properties of the ant farm (e.g., they are not confused about ant A and ant B) to illustrate the intended interpretation of these semantic values. The idea is that their opinions are indicators of profitability for Fred. Let us rejoin Ginger in her attempt to find a way to be inferentially charitable to Fred. Ginger should begin by assigning semantic values to Fred's sentences in the following way. Assume that Fred utters a confused sentence, *p*, with the term 'Charlie' in it. Ginger should substitute 'ant A' for 'Charlie' and ask Sal whether the resulting sentence is true, and she should substitute 'ant B' for 'Charlie' and ask Sam whether the resulting sentence is true. If they both say, "Yes" or one says, "Yes" and the other says, "I don't know" then Ginger should assign Y to Fred's sentence. If both say, "No" or one says, "No" and the other says, "I don't know" then

Ginger should assign N to Fred's sentence. If both say, "I don't know" then Ginger should assign ? to Fred's sentence. If one says, "Yes" and the other says, "No" then Ginger should assign Y&N to Fred's sentence.

The semantic values are grouped as follows: if a sentence is Y or Y&N, then it is at-least-Y and if a sentence is N or Y&N, then it is at-least-N. Ginger can now use the following standard to evaluate Fred's arguments: an argument is valid just in case it preserves at-least-Y (i.e., if the premises are at-least-Y, then the conclusion is at-least-Y) and the absence of at-least-N (i.e. if the conclusion is at-least-N, then one of the premises is at-least-N). Using the interpretations of the semantic values, one can generate truth tables for the logical connectives. The implications deemed valid by this standard are exactly those deemed valid by the Anderson-Belnap system Efde. Thus, according to Camp (2002: 125–157), the logic of confusion is a relevance logic.

One of the most important consequences of Camp's theory is that two fundamental aspects of understanding come into conflict in the presence of confusion. Understanding someone requires both evaluating her beliefs for truth and evaluating her arguments for validity (or strength). Understanding someone involves both a grasp on whether to accept or reject her beliefs and a grasp on her reasons for her beliefs. In normal discourse, these two elements go hand in hand: one decides whether to accept another's beliefs by consulting her reasons and assesses another's reasons by deciding whether to accept her beliefs. Camp argues that confusion frustrates this fundamental symmetry. One can make decisions about accepting a confused person's beliefs by attributing truth values to them, but then the confused person's reasons will be obscured. One can evaluate a confused person's arguments with Camp's confusion logic, but then the confused person's beliefs will be incomprehensible. When attempting to understand a confused person, one faces a dilemma: either attempt to evaluate his beliefs at the expense of making him irrational or try to appreciate his arguments at the cost of rendering his beliefs unintelligible. One cannot be both doxastically and inferentially charitable to a confused person at once.

4. Inference, scorekeeping, and confusion

The point of this section is to present an extension of Brandom's theory of content. At the semantic level, the extension allows members of a discursive practice to disagree about which inferences are correct. It will also allow them to adopt different semantic positions (i.e., use different standards when evaluating inferences). At the pragmatic level, the extension allows scorekeepers to acknowledge, undertake,

and attribute inferential commitments to one another. Although Brandom's model already includes inferential commitments, he assumes (to simplify the theory) that each member of a discursive practice attributes the same ones to everyone else. The extension also introduces a new type of status: scorekeeping commitments. These allow scorekeepers to change the way they keep score on one another.

These additions allow Brandom's model of content to explain what it is to adopt a semantic position. When a person adopts a semantic position, one commits oneself to an inferential standard for use in assessing someone's inferential behavior. I explain adopting semantic positions in terms of acknowledging scorekeeping commitments. The reason for this strategy is, of course, to comply with his principle that pragmatic phenomena should explain semantic ones. Once complete, the extension of Brandom's theory of content will provide an explanation for the difference between normal and confused discourse, and it will yield a pragmatic version of Camp's theory of confusion.

I present the extension of Brandom's theory of content in two parts: the account of inferential commitments and the account of scorekeeping commitments. They are combined to explain what it is to adopt a semantic position in general and the semantic position appropriate for the confused in particular. The following are three reasons his theory needs the extension.

First, people disagree on which inferences are correct. Brandom explains this disagreement in terms of differences in beliefs. According to Brandom, people disagree about which sentences follow from a given sentence not because they accept different inferences but because they accept different potential premises. One's views on what follows from some claim will depend on both the inferences one endorses and the sentences one has available to use as premises (Brandom 1994: 357). However, people also disagree about which inference rules are correct. One cannot explain this disagreement in terms of differences in beliefs. If Brandom's theory of content is to describe actual discursive practices then it will have to allow practitioners to endorse different inferential standards.

Second, discursive practitioners adopt semantic positions with respect to one another. We do not hold each other to the same inferential standards. The standard one uses for assessing inferences varies from person to person and context to context. If Brandom's account of discursive practice is to be realistic, it must capture this important aspect of our inferential behavior. There is a difference between treating someone as if he is inferring incorrectly according to his own standards and treating him as if he has adopted the wrong standards. One needs to look no farther than common philosophical debates for evidence of this phenomenon. For example, it is *appropriate* for a classical logician to treat an intuitionist as if he has made a simple logical error if the intuitionist's argument employs double negation, even though

the classical logician accepts this inference rule. On the other hand, it is *inappropriate* for an intuitionist to treat a classical logician as if she has made a simple logical error if the classical logician's argument employs double negation, even though the intuitionist rejects this rule. The debate between intuitionists and classical logicians that we find in the philosophical literature is one in which each finds faults with the other's inferential behavior. However, they take one another to have adopted the wrong inferential standards. An account of adopting a semantic position allows Brandom's model of discursive practice to explain this phenomenon.

The two external reasons given above are related. I argued that if Brandom's theory is to account for the fact that humans endorse different inferences, then it has to allow scorekeepers to acknowledge, undertake, and attribute inferential commitments to one another. Further, not only do people endorse different inferences, but we also evaluate others according to different standards of what counts as a good inference. The two phenomena go hand in hand. If I can attribute inferential commitments to you that are different from those I acknowledge, then I need a way of judging whether you have followed your own inferential commitments. Semantic positions fit the bill. By adopting a semantic position on you, I assess your arguments according to inferential standards that I might not accept. Thus, allowing scorekeepers to disagree about inferential correctness and allowing them to adopt semantic positions go hand in hand. A discursive practice in which scorekeepers acknowledge, undertake, and attribute inferential commitments is one in which scorekeepers adopt semantic positions.

Third, extending Brandom's model to include semantic position taking allows him to account for defective discourse without sacrificing linguistic deflationism. I will not be able to argue for this claim in any detail. Instead, I show how it allows him to explain confusion. Before doing so, I would like to present the general strategy. Brandom needs to explain defective discourse using only the limited resources of linguistic deflationism. My suggestion is that *he should explain defective discourse in terms of what it is to treat some bit of discourse as defective*. He (1994: 206–212 and ch. 8, respectively) has already used a similar strategy to explain both perceptual reliability and the representational dimension of propositional content. One treats some discourse as defective by adopting a different semantic position with respect to it. That is, one assesses the arguments that involve defective discourse according to a different standard. A theory of each type of defective discourse should follow the same strategy. For example, a theory of vagueness for Brandom should be an account of the semantic position one adopts when one assesses arguments that involve vague expressions. In pragmatic terms, it should be an account of the scorekeeping commitments one acknowledges and the inferential commitments one uses when one keeps score on someone who is using a vague term.

4.1 Inferential commitments

My goal in this subsection is to extend Brandom's scorekeeping pragmatics to conversations in which participants endorse different inferences. The way to accomplish this is to permit scorekeepers to keep track of each other's inferential commitments. An *inferential commitment* is a type of deontic status that one can undertake, acknowledge, or attribute; it is just like a doxastic commitment or a practical commitment in this respect. One can be entitled to inferential commitments as well. There are, of course, differences between inferential commitments and doxastic commitments. One expresses a doxastic commitment by uttering an assertion, while one expresses an inferential commitment by treating one doxastic commitment as a good reason for another. It might seem that one could express an inferential commitment by asserting that one sentence follows from another. Although I do not want to rule this out, I do not want the possibility of expressing inferential commitments to depend on the presence of logical vocabulary. I want a model of scorekeeping that incorporates differences of opinion about inferential commitments from the start.

I need to address a number of other issues surrounding inferential commitments. First, do they participate in inferential relations? That is, can one infer one inferential commitment from another? It seems to me that the answer is *yes*. For example, an inferential commitment expressed by <<something is flat ∴ something is flat>>[4] follows from the inferential commitment expressed by <<something is flat and brown ∴ something is flat>>. This issue is important for formulating the norms that govern scorekeeping practice. For example, Apu might want to say that if Manjula is a reliable observer of red things, then he is too. Recall that inferential commitments explain the status of observational reliability. Thus, Apu's formulation of the scorekeeping norm expresses an inferential commitment that holds between two inferential commitments. The fact that inferential commitments participate in inferences implies that scorekeepers must keep track of the inferential commitments acknowledged and those undertaken by each member of a conversation.

Another issue is the way in which one can come to be entitled to an inferential commitment. We can extend the default and challenge structure to them in a straightforward way. When someone makes an assertion, is challenged on it, and makes another assertion that is intended to serve as a reason for the first, a member of the audience can challenge the asserter in two different ways. An audience member can make a *doxastic challenge* in which he challenges the asserter to demonstrate entitlement to the doxastic commitment expressed by his second assertion; or an audience member can make an *inferential challenge* in which he challenges the asserter to demonstrate entitlement to the inferential commitment expressed by his use of the second assertion as a reason for his first.

One might make a case for the claim that one can have default entitlement to an inferential commitment based on one's status as a reliable reporter. However, it seems doubtful that a member of a discursive practice that does not contain logical vocabulary will be able to provide a satisfactory response to an inferential challenge. Nevertheless, a scorekeeper in such a discursive practice can register the fact that he does not endorse the inferential commitment undertaken by the asserter. In a more advanced discursive practice, one can justify inferential commitments and inherit them by testimony. (Debates about intuitionism provide a number of good examples of each of these discursive phenomena.)

One important consequence of this addition to Brandom's scorekeeping pragmatics is that propositional content will be doubly perspectival. Brandom is already committed to the view that people who acknowledge different doxastic commitments will disagree about the inferential role of a claim (i.e. its content). If one accepts the claim that scorekeepers can differ on which inferences they endorse as well, then propositional content will be relative to a set of doxastic commitments and to a set of inferential commitments.

4.2 Scorekeeping commitments

I need to introduce a new type of commitment into Brandom's pragmatic theory to explain what a scorekeeper is doing when she adopts a semantic position. A *scorekeeping commitment* is a type of practical commitment — a commitment to action. That is, one performs an action by acknowledging a practical commitment. By acknowledging a scorekeeping commitment, one performs a special type of action — one keeps score. Undertaking a scorekeeping commitment is a way of saying, "I am going to keep score in such and such a way". It is a commitment to future scorekeeping actions. One can, of course, change the way one keeps score. In this case, one acknowledges a new scorekeeping commitment.

For the most part, scorekeeping commitments obey the rules for practical commitments. Thus, one can acknowledge, undertake, and attribute scorekeeping commitments. They participate in inferences and are susceptible to entitlement as well. The fact that scorekeeping commitments participate in inferences implies that scorekeepers will have to keep track of the scorekeeping commitments acknowledged and those undertaken by each member of a conversation.

One can distinguish several different types of scorekeeping commitments. There are those that affect how one keeps score on oneself and those that affect how one keeps score on others. (Example of a change in the latter: "I'm going to pay more attention to Otto's attitudes toward Becky".) There are those that affect the way one inherits commitments and entitlements from others. (Example: "I'm

going to be less gullible".) Some scorekeeping commitments pertain to the relation between different types of commitments. For example, one can acknowledge a scorekeeping commitment to treat only those who accept the claim that monkeys do not grow on trees as possessors of the concept of a monkey. That is, a scorekeeper might interpret a person's use of 'monkey' as meaning *monkey* only if the scorekeeper attributes to this person the doxastic commitment associated with the claim that monkeys do not grow on trees. Otherwise, the scorekeeper will treat the person's term 'monkey' as if it means something else (or nothing at all). One acknowledges one of these scorekeeping commitments when one calls a sentence "meaning-constitutive". Similar scorekeeping commitments pertain to attributions of analyticity, definition, etc. There are scorekeeping commitments that are appropriate only for the one who undertakes them and those that are appropriate for everyone in a particular situation. For example, if one member of a three-person conversation realizes that one of the other members is confused on some topic, and realizes that the third member recognizes the confusion as well, then the first will adopt a scorekeeping commitment with respect to how to assess the confused person's inferences. Moreover, the first treats this scorekeeping commitment as one the other (non-confused) member of the conversation ought to adopt as well. The semantic position associated with confusion is one that is appropriate for anyone who deals with a confused person. This list is far from complete but I hope it helps flesh out the idea of a scorekeeping commitment.

An important issue is entitlement to scorekeeping commitments. As with all commitments, there should be a default and challenge structure associated with scorekeeping commitments. For example, Camp (2002: 191–217) presents a reading of Locke according to which he is confused. A participant in a conversation with Camp might say, "Joe, Locke does not confuse acts and objects, so stop treating him as if he does". Camp would then have an opportunity to justify his scorekeeping commitment. The way entitlements to scorekeeping commitments are passed from person to person will be a bit tricky. Since scorekeeping commitments are practical commitments, it will depend on the role entitlement plays for practical commitments. I remarked at the end of the previous paragraph that some scorekeeping commitments will have inheritance structures such that if one member of a conversation entitles himself to one of these scorekeeping commitments, then the others become entitled to endorse it as well. I will have to leave the details for some other occasion.

4.3 Semantic positions

Semantic positions involve standards by which one assesses arguments for validity. (I will follow Camp in restricting my attention to deductive inferences.) I should

mention that when someone treats another as confused, she adopts one type of semantic position, and when someone adopts a semantic position, he acknowledges one type of scorekeeping commitment. There are many other types of scorekeeping commitments and many other types of semantic positions.

When a member of a discursive practice adopts a semantic position, she acknowledges a scorekeeping commitment. The content of her scorekeeping commitment is that she will evaluate the inferences of some other scorekeeper according to some standard. Obviously, scorekeepers always employ some set of inferential commitments to assess inferences. Thus, scorekeepers always employ some semantic position or other. We can think of the most common one as a default position. Most likely, the default position will be one that takes everyone to endorse the same inferential commitments. The default position corresponds to a scorekeeping commitment to assess others' inferences according to one's own inferential commitments. When a scorekeeper adopts a different semantic position, she acknowledges a new scorekeeping commitment. She commits herself to evaluate the inferences of another according to some inferential standard that she might not endorse.

4.4 Confusion pragmatics

On Camp's account of confusion, someone who interacts with a confused person should adopt a semantic position, according to which she does not attribute truth values to the confused sentences, and she assesses them according to whether they preserve profitability. The person adopting the new semantic position uses Belnap's useful four-valued logic to track profitability. At the pragmatic level, adopting this semantic position corresponds to acknowledging a specific scorekeeping commitment.

In the interest of space, I have not presented any of the substitution and recurrence structures that allow Brandom to extend his theory of content from the sentential level to the subsentential level. Thus, although confusion is essentially a subsentential phenomenon in that confusion pertains to subsentential expressions, I will deal with confused sentences only.

Let us return to Fred, Ginger, and the ants. Assume that Ginger has decided that Fred is confused. Any sentence Fred utters containing 'Charlie', 'the big ant', etc. will count for Ginger as a confused sentence. Any argument that contains confused sentences will be a confused argument. In semantic terms, once Ginger has decided that Fred is confused, she adopts a particular semantic position toward him. I will refer to it as the *confusion position*. When Ginger adopts the confusion position, she decides not to attribute truth values to Fred's confused sentences.

(Recall that no such assignment can be inferentially charitable.) Further, she assigns semantic values from Belnap's useful four-valued logic to Fred's confused sentences in an effort to assess his arguments for profitability preservation. To do so, she must either have the authority to play the roles of Sal and Sam or else have access to someone who does. Once Ginger assigns the semantic values, she can evaluate Fred's confused arguments for validity.

In pragmatic terms, once Ginger has decided that Fred is confused, she acknowledges a scorekeeping commitment. It is a commitment to keep score on Fred in a certain way. In order to demonstrate the content of this commitment, assume that Fred utters a sentence, *p* as the conclusion of an argument whose only premise is *q*. Assume also that Ginger has decided that *p* and *q* are confused sentences. Ginger decides that *p* is an assertion. She understands its content and attributes to Fred a doxastic commitment that corresponds to it. She follows the procedure illustrated in the scorekeeping example (Section 2.2) up to the stage when she must assess Fred's entitlement to *p*. Assume that Fred is not default entitled to it and he has not acquired it by testimony. Ginger must decide whether Fred's argument, <<q∴p>>, entitles him to *p*.

The scorekeeping commitment Ginger acknowledges has four aspects. First, she refuses to attribute truth values to Fred's confused sentences. For Brandom's pragmatic theory, this amounts to a refusal to acknowledge either the doxastic commitments she attributes to Fred (even if he turns out to be entitled to them) or the doxastic commitments that correspond to their negations. Thus, she must disengage from an important part of what it is to treat an utterance as an assertion. Although Fred is making assertions, his commitments are not fit for public consumption.

Second, Ginger treats Fred as if he has undertaken new inferential commitments. These inferential commitments correspond to those deemed valid by the relevance logic associated with Belnap's four-valued scheme. These inferential commitments will most likely be different from the one Ginger acknowledges. Note that Fred would probably not acknowledge these inferential commitments either. However, by virtue of being confused, he has undertaken them (according to Ginger).

Third, she uses these inferential commitments to assess Fred's confused arguments. To do so, she must acknowledge a doxastic commitment to the effect that she has access to an authority on the topic about which Fred is confused. She now consults this authority (which might just be her) and acknowledges doxastic commitments that correspond to the substitutional variants of Fred's confused sentences (the sentences that result from replacing 'Charlie' with 'ant A' or 'ant B'). She uses these doxastic commitments to attribute epistemic values from Belnap's

four-valued scheme to Fred's confused sentences. She then evaluates Fred's argument (<<q ∴ p>>) according to the inferential commitments she attributed to him in the second stage.

Fourth, she uses the results of the previous two stages to determine whether she should attribute entitlement to *p*. If she takes Fred to be entitled to *q*, and she takes <<q ∴ p>> to be valid by the relevance logic in question, then she takes Fred to be entitled to *p*. Remember that she does not take this attribution of entitlement to authorize anyone else to acknowledge *p*.[5]

It is essential to appreciate that the scorekeeping commitment Ginger acknowledges undermines an important aspect of assertion. Camp argues that when interpreting the confused, there is a tension between two aspects of understanding: assessing reasons and assessing beliefs. Brandom's model of assertion fuses these two components of understanding. He emphasizes the fact that, in general, understanding someone's belief requires not only deciding whether to adopt it, but also appreciating his reasons for it as well. For Brandom, if I think you have a good reason for your belief, then I have good reason to accept it too (other things being equal). In other words, Brandom builds inferential and doxastic charity into his model of assertion. However, in the confusion example, Ginger can think that Fred has a good reason for his confused belief only if she refuses to even consider whether she should accept it or reject it. Inferential and doxastic charity are incompatible in the presence of confusion. If Brandom's model of assertion is correct, then inferential and doxastic charity must coincide in general. That is, one cannot attribute confusion to everyone and still be participating in a discursive practice. Thus, scorekeeping commitments for confusion must be exceptions to the norm. Adopting the confused position is a discursively advanced thing to do.

5. Conclusion

I have offered a number of general and specific suggestions; the following is my attempt at a summary. Defective discourse poses several problems for linguistic deflationism. Brandom, a linguistic deflationist, offers a model of discursive practice based on a pragmatic theory. Camp presents a theory of confusion based on an account of adopting semantic positions. I have suggested that Brandom can solve the problems posed by defective discourse if he explains them in terms of adopting semantic positions. Instead of arguing directly for this claim, I presented an extension of his model of discursive practice that allows him to explain confusion in terms of semantic positions. The extension has two parts: an account of attributing, undertaking, and acknowledging inferential commitments (Section 4.1)

and an account of scorekeeping commitments (Section 4.2). I gave a rough sketch of how Brandom can explain what it is to adopt a semantic position in pragmatic terms (Section 4.3), and what it is that scorekeepers do when they adopt the semantic position appropriate for the confused (Section 4.4).

Of course, there are a number of problems with this proposal that I have been unable to cover. One issue is how to present an account of the content of confused sentences and expressions. That is, one needs a confusion semantics to accompany Camp's confusion logic and my confusion pragmatics. It seems to me that Brandom's explanation of content in terms of inferential role can be extended to permit such an account. Another issue is whether my rough sketch of how Brandom can accommodate semantic positions can be filled out so that it does not conflict with the rest of his theory of content. In particular, he will need pragmatically explicating vocabulary that allow scorekeepers to make explicit the attitudes associated with inferential commitments and scorekeeping commitments (Brandom 1994: 529–613). The extension will also change his account of ingredient and freestanding content (pp. 334–359).

A more general problem is whether this strategy allows him to acknowledge the possibility of hidden defectiveness — cases that are unknown by anyone in the discursive practice. If defective discourse is to be objective (in one sense of this term), then whether some patch of discourse counts as defective cannot depend on someone treating it that way. I think that this challenge can be met but I cannot say more about it here. A related problem is whether all the examples of defective discourse will be susceptible to this treatment. That is, is it possible to present a theory of vagueness or reference failure in terms of what it is to treat something as a vague expression or as a failed attempt to refer? I think that there is a strong case for a positive answer but, again, it will have to wait for another occasion.

Notes

* I would like to thank John Morrison, Graham Hubbs, and Robert Brandom for helpful comments on an early draft.

1. Although I cannot defend this claim here, I suggest that non-factual discourse (e.g., ethical and aesthetic discourse according to some philosophers) and discourse that typically generates paradoxes (e.g., the semantic, pragmatic, and intensional ones) could be treated as defective discourse as well.

2. See Field (2001: ch. 4) for an example of the former; and Grover, Camp and Belnap (1975) and Brandom (1994: ch. 5) for examples of the latter.

3. Davidson (1984) argues that a theory of meaning should have the form of a Tarskian theory of truth, but he does not claim that humans actually construct Tarskian theories of truth to interpret each other. Rather, the idea is that a Tarskian theory of truth is something used by the theorist to make sense of what is going on when one person interprets another.

4. I use double angle brackets as a systematic way to generate names of arguments. The entries prior to the '∴' are the premises of the argument and the entry after it is the conclusion. Note that this convention individuates arguments only as finely as their premises and conclusions.

5. One consequence of this account of the pragmatics of confusion will be that the notion of entitlement is split into a weak version that does not entitle others to adopt the same commitment and a strong version that does.

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Responses

Robert B. Brandom

Preamble

These admirable, insightful essays raise many more useful and interesting considerations than I can possibly address here — or, in some cases, yet know not how to address at all. It is a rich haul. As a result, I have been obliged to confine myself to commenting on a relatively small number of points, accordingly as they seemed most telling and illuminating, and as what I might say in response could turn out to be most helpful.

Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer offers a fascinating rational reconstruction of the tradition out of which the theory of *Making it Explicit* (*MIE*) grows, enriching our understanding of both by the context his magisterial meta-narrative provides. I am in equal parts admiring of and instructed by it. He closes by expressing the concern that my account uncritically and unnecessarily (by its own better lights) — although intelligibly, in virtue of some of its antecedents — veers into a kind of naturalistic social behaviorism. This worry points to the fineness of the methodological line the account is committed to pursuing. On the one hand, the project is to *say*, in terms that do not make essential appeal to attributions to practitioners that employ *semantic* or *intentional* vocabulary, what one must *do* in order to count thereby as *saying* something — that is, to do something to which semantic and intentional vocabulary properly apply. That enterprise has a reductionist sound (though I would insist that the fact that what is sought is a non-intentional *pragmatic* metalanguage makes a big difference). On the other hand, in pursuing that project, essential use is made of *normative* vocabulary, and it is asserted that such vocabulary is both ineliminable in this context, and irreducible to non-normative vocabulary. That does not sound so reductive or naturalistic.

While insisting on the irreducibility of the normative to the non-social natural, I am concerned to show that norms implicit in social practice — normative

statuses instituted by our practical (initially, non-conceptual) attitudes towards one another — need not be thought of as *super*natural and (so) spooky. There were no commitments or responsibilities, no authority or responsibility, until hominids started taking or treating each other in practice *as* committed or entitled, authoritative or responsible. Here is an analogy: the status of being *food* is instituted by the practical attitudes of animals, who take or treat something *as* food by *eating* it. Food is what they are treating something as when they eat it. The social pragmatic phenomenalist approach to the kind of normativity that articulates discursive practice accordingly begins by asking: what is to the status of a performance as *appropriate* as *eating* is to the status of something as *food*? My suggestion is that *sanctions* — rewards and punishments — can play that role. How reductively naturalistic that idea is depends on how one conceives sanctioning. If it is construed as positive or negative reinforcement — responding in ways that raise or lower the probability that the performance being reinforced will be repeated — then the conception of norms is indeed behavioristic.

But in a social setting, it is easy to build on such a basis a notion of normativity that swings free of statistical regularities of behavior. Suppose the hominids Og and Ug build a hut and guard it with clubs, driving off all who attempt to enter it unless the petitioners show a leaf from the special tree at the top of the mountain. They are in a straightforward sense, explicable in wholly behavioristic terms, treating such leaves as *licenses* or *tickets* having the normative status of *entitling* their possessors to do something they would not otherwise be permitted to do: enter the hut. But now imagine that in the same community, a teacher rewards her young charges who respond to differently colored objects by uttering noises that she is in this sense treating as appropriate or correct, by offering them leaves from the hard to reach ticket-tree. Since these confer a *right* that one would not otherwise possess, they are intelligible as *rewards*, that is, as positive sanctions. And that is so even if some or even all of the charges are not in fact behaviorally moved (positively reinforced) by those rewards — intuitively, because they don't care about entering Og-and-Ug's hut. Chapter One of *MIE* describes how chains of *normative* sanctions — rewards and punishments that consist only of alterations of normative status — can be instituted in this way, and further, how in these terms we can make sense of normative sanctions that are not connected in any way to behavioral reinforcements. This is the strategy by which normative pragmatism seeks to distinguish itself from social behaviorism.

Jaroslav Peregrin's thoughtful, wide-ranging essay focuses on one element of the broader context in which Stekeler-Weithofer places the project of *MIE*. He situates it by means of an extended compare-and-contrast exercise relating two

broad traditions in philosophical and linguistic theory. I welcome and endorse his characterizations, and find particularly interesting his suggestion that important strands in Chomsky's own thought would underwrite a far more Wittgensteinian, pragmatic, approach to semantics than he or his followers have typically pursued. Summarizing his own assessment, Peregrin says "I think we should settle for a use-theory of meaning, i.e., a theory according to which the meaning of an expression amounts to the role the expression plays within our linguistic transactions". My own view is slightly different. At the most general level, it is expressed in the slogan: "Meaning is to (proprieties of) use as theory is to observation". It is licit to postulate meanings, which need not themselves be thought of (contra Dummett) as themselves aspects of use, in order to codify and explain how it is correct to use expressions. Associating a meaning or content with a sentence or subsentential expression goes hand in hand with specifying in a systematic way how to derive from it various normative features of the use of that expression — for instance, the significance of its assertional, imperative, or interrogative use, its use as the antecedent or consequent of a conditional, and so on. At a more specific level, I suggest a candidate for playing the methodological role of meanings: role in inference, substitution, and anaphoric chains (the ISA approach to semantics).

Ruth Garrett Millikan, who is Wilfrid Sellars's most eminent and accomplished student, has done us the service, and me the honor, of offering a framework within which to compare and contrast her approach to intentionality with mine, looking at each particularly with respect to its debt and relation to our common intellectual 'father'. Richard Rorty originated the now-traditional division of Sellarsians into a right and left wing. In this botanization, right-wing Sellarsians are most impressed with Sellars's scientific realism, taking their cue from his slogan that "science is the measure of all things, of those that are, that they are, and of those that are not, that they are not". Their manifesto is his famous essay "Philosophy and the scientific image of man". Left-wing Sellarsians are those who take Sellars's greatest philosophical insights to be the critiques of semantic atomism and (so) epistemological foundationalism at the core of his masterwork "Empiricism and the philosophy of mind". (Rorty incidentally expressed the hope that these two schools of thought could work out their differences more irenically than did the right- and left-wing Hegelians, who settled theirs at a strenuous, extended conference otherwise known as the battle of Stalingrad.) There is something right about this opposition, and along this dimension I think Millikan is slightly to my naturalistic right. But since she has fully absorbed Sellars's lessons in "EPM", in our case the left/right division does not seem to cut at the joints. She has sketched a different context, one that is much more helpful.

One way of thinking about it is to look at what we each take out of another central Sellars essay that we both admire: "Some reflections on language games". Impressed by his account elsewhere of the way worldly regularities can come to be *pictured* by aspects of the activity of creatures making their way through the world, Millikan takes up out of that essay Sellars's notion of *pattern-governed* behavior as a semantically crucial category much richer than merely *regular* behavior, but still far short of (though arguably helpful in the explanation of) fully intentional *rule-governed* behavior. (I talk about this a bit in the twin critiques of what I call 'regularism' and 'regulism' in the first chapter of *MIE*.) In particular, Millikan is inspired by Sellars's idea that the way to get a *naturalistic* story that can fund some of the basic kinds of *normative* assessment required to see *semantic* content as coming into play is to look at the *diachronic* dynamics by which some behavioral patterns can be established and stabilized. The sophisticated, broadly evolutionary story that Millikan tells to elaborate this thought integrates and illuminates the relations between the natural and the normative dimensions of intentionality (roughly, those that impressed the right- and the left-wing Sellarsians, respectively) *far* better than that of Sellars himself — for whom the naturalistic dimension of picturing and the normative dimension of semantic assertibility remained in largely unresolved tension.

By contrast, inspired by Sellars's seminal "Inference and meaning", when I read the language-games essay I am impressed first by the thought that what makes what he there calls "language-*entry*" transitions, in perception, and "language-*exit*" transitions, in action, *language* entries and exits — what gives them specifically *conceptual* content at all — is the *inferential* connections manifested in what he calls "language-language" moves.

As Millikan stresses, these differences of emphasis are by no means irreconcilable. She, for instance, accepts the essential role of inference and public assertion in *linguistic* intentionality — a category to which she devotes a great deal of analytic effort — but is centrally concerned to show how that sort of intentionality is built on more basic, non-linguistic varieties. I think her argument that a single broad form of explanation — roughly, in terms of selectionally stabilized Proper Functions — suffices to account *both* for various kinds of primitive content discernible in a wide variety of purely biological cases *and* for an impressive variety of quite sophisticated purely linguistic semantic and intentional phenomena (indexicals, substance-terms, identity locutions, propositional attitude ascriptions…) is a theoretical *tour de force*, and one of the wonders of our philosophical age. I suspect, however, that Millikan tends to overemphasize (in her own characterizations of what she is doing, as opposed to what she actually does) the biologistic character of her account (for instance, in the purposely provocative title of her path-breaking

work: *Language, Thought, and Other Biological Categories*), relative to the crucial (for her, not just for me) *social* element. What I find most admirable about her theory is the way she applies a form of explanation demonstrably significant already at a merely biological level — not just pre-sapient or pre-mammalian, but even at a sub-organismic level — in explaining key *semantic* features of signs and properties of signs in terms of the *pragmatics* of their production and consumption, and especially the *social* relations between producers and consumers. But I do not think that this brilliant *extension* of the apparatus should be thought of as having the *reductionist* consequences she sometimes is pleased to attribute to it.

Sebastian Knell, as the author of the first book-length study of *MIE*, has long studied and fully mastered the theory developed there. In his essay, he offers a very clear account of the understanding presented there of the use of the non-theoretical representational locutions we employ to talk and think about what we are talking and thinking *about*: the 'of' of "I am thinking of a number between 1 and 10", (rather than the 'of' of "the pen of my aunt"), and the 'about' of "He talked about Hegel", (rather than the 'about' of "the book weighs about five pounds"). He then offers a brilliant, original way of thinking about the philosophical significance of that account: it should be thought of as offering a *deflationary* theory of intentionality, by strict analogy to deflationary theories of truth. This strikes me as an extremely promising line of research.

Sebastian Rödl's deep and thoughtful essay contrasts the abstract semantic view of objects presented in *MIE* to a richer, temporal view specific to empirical objects. The more general approach treats objects just as what singular terms purport to refer to, and then understands that 'purport' in terms of their behavior in substitution inferences. (Existential commitments appear as a special kind of substitutional commitment, with different sorts of existence — e.g., spatio-temporal, numerical, fictional — distinguished by the different classes of singular terms that play the role of "canonical designators" in them.) This notion of *object* (where 'object' itself plays the role of a pro-sortal, rather than of some variety of extremely general sortal) is intended to be general enough to apply, Frege-wise, to numbers, as well as to observable objects. Rödl argues that this notion leaves out something crucial to the identification and re-identification of spatio-temporal objects through empirical change. Taking his cue from Kant, he suggests what is missing: a notion of the temporal form of judgment. I think this is a genuinely profound idea, and I do not pretend to see to the bottom of it. But he may be right.

Friedrich Kambartel very usefully situates my inferentialist pragmatism in the context of the German tradition of philosophical constructivism, to which, among many other traditions, he has made distinguished contributions. Although I was

ignorant of the work of this school when I wrote *MIE*, I have since come to admire its many achievements, and to appreciate the many commonalities of motivation that animate our projects — helped immensely by many long and stimulating conversations in which Kambartel, with great patience and forbearance, both educated me and conducted a careful compare-and-contrast exercise. I have been completely convinced of the justice of his principal complaint: that my exclusive emphasis on *inference* overlooks the crucial contribution to their conceptual content that is made by the role expressions play in various *constructions*. The way some more primitive discursive abilities can be systematically arranged and deployed so as to amount to more complex discursive abilities is both an essential feature of the content of the expressions involved, and is not reducible to the role they play in inference. Understanding such constructive elaboration of more basic concept-using abilities will, I think, require close attention to inferential roles, but it is a kind of reasoning, in a broad sense, and yields a kind of conceptual understanding that is not exhausted by those roles as they show up in my account. My lack of attention to this important species of concept-articulating practice is made all the more embarrassing by the fact that a great deal of the explicative work actually undertaken in *MIE* consists precisely of construction, rather than more narrowly inferential argumentation. The whole semantic project of Part Two of the book can be thought of as using the notions of *inference, substitution,* and *anaphora* to construct the semantic contents expressed by various familiar sorts of philosophical-linguistic expressions: semantic vocabulary ('true' and 'refers'), intentional or representational vocabulary ('of' and 'about'), propositional-attitude ascribing locutions, singular terms, proper names, expressions of existential commitment, and so on.

Kambartel points out that while both approaches understand conceptual content in terms of practices of justifying claims, a principal difference between their strategies is that constructivism employs a very strong notion of justification, generalizing from the model of mathematical proof to something like dispositive evidence, while inferentialism employs a very weak notion of justification, construing it as merely probative evidence: something like there being some reasons in favor of the conclusion. I do not fully understand the worry that he expresses concerning the latter. He seems to think that the weak notion of justification, since it can't guarantee *truth*, can't be used to characterize the very same *contents* that are called 'true'. But the truth claim will just inherit whatever kind of content the antecedent of the prosentence has. And that content is *not* characterized just in terms of the dimension of entitlement, which is (as he desires) just one "element in a much more complex conceptual situation". For one of the basic innovations of *MIE* is that its normative pragmatics begins with *two* kinds of normative status: *commitments*,

as well as *entitlements* to such commitments. The very weak entitlement-preserving inferences are only one species, with much stronger commitment-preserving inferences and incompatibility entailments (discussed below) also important in articulating conceptual content.

John McDowell's paper is the most recent fruit of a long, thoughtful, and generous (which is not to say, in the end sympathetic) engagement on his part with *MIE*. As a result, his trenchant criticisms are directed for the most part at core elements of the project pursued there.

One of his concerns is the contrast between representationalist and inferentialist orders of semantic explanation, which is invoked both to motivate adopting the latter, and to situate doing so in a historical context. (The latter enterprise is pursued at greater length in my later book, *Tales of the Mighty Dead: Historical Essays in the Metaphysics of Intentionality*, so I will say no more here about how I understand the pre–20th century semantic tradition.) The most important observation McDowell makes in this connection, I think, is that it need not be the case either that representational relations or concepts should be understood as prior in the order of semantic explanation to inferential ones, or that inferential ones should be understood as prior in the order of semantic explanation to representational ones. It may be, after all, that neither can be understood apart from the other — that reference and inference come as an indissoluble conceptual package that cannot be analyzed reductively, but only relationally. I agree, of course. Looking for a way to get an independent theoretical grip on one range of concepts, and then explicating the other in terms of it is only *one* strategy for illuminating the relations between the representational and inferential perspectives on semantic content. If an account of this shape *is* possible, however, then we understand the relations between the two perspectives better in terms of it than we would if we did not realize that fact and content ourselves from the outset with a holistic relational picture.

I think we have learned a great deal — indeed, most of what we do understand in semantics — from the pursuit of the representationalist order of explanation, from Frege's *Grundgesetze* at the outset of the modern history of the subject, through Russell's and Whitehead's *Principia*, Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, the Vienna Circle's logical empiricism, Tarski's model theory as interpreted philosophically by Quine, down to the programs in naturalistic semantics of our own day, such as Fodor's. The atomistic, bottom-up, representationalist semantic strategy of beginning with denotational relations between singular terms and objects, and predicates and sets of objects (or tuples of objects), then appealing to set-inclusion relations among them to assign truth conditions to atomic sentences, then to functions taking all these things as arguments and values to assign intensions to logical and other operators (such as modal ones), and finally appealing to set-

theoretic relations among those structures to derive inferential relations has had a lot of successes. For example, one difference in the inferential behavior of adverbs is that for some of them, the attributive adverbs, if someone performs action A X-ly, it follows that they perform action A. If Donald butters the toast slowly or in his kitchen, then he butters the toast. But for others this inference does not go through. If Donald butters the toast symbolically, or in his imagination, then it does not follow that he butters the toast. In David Lewis's generalization of California semantics (in his "General Semantics"), if we take singular terms to represent objects, and sentences to represent sets of possible worlds, then one-place predicates represent functions from objects to sets of possible worlds — intuitively, those in which the objects represented have the properties (thereby) represented. Then adverbs represent functions from functions from objects to sets of possible worlds to functions from objects to sets of possible worlds. In these terms we can say exactly what the difference is between the functions represented by attributive adverbs, which support the inference in question and those represented by non-attributive adverbs, which do not. Seeing the possibility of this sort of reductive representationalist explanation of an inferential phenomenon is genuinely illuminating, and ought to be a part of any account of the relations between the two dimensions. (I go to some trouble in the Appendix to Chapter Six of *MIE* to show that and how a substitution-inferential approach can reproduce just this sort of story — about adverbs and other sub-sentential expressions — working, as it were, from the top down instead of the bottom up.) The aim of *MIE* is not to say that the inferentialist order of explanation is the only one that can provide semantic illumination. It is to explore what kind of illumination it *can* provide, given that we have learned so much from the contrary linear order. For phenomena not amenable to either approach, we will have to fall back on the merely relational account. But retreating in the face of the mere possibility that a more robust (more committive, hence riskier) explanatory strategy may fail seems prematurely defeatist.

McDowell points out that the label 'inferentialism' is in some ways misleading, given that the official view of *MIE* is that *inference* and *assertion* are co-ordinate concepts, in the sense that one cannot engage in inferential practices without engaging in assertional ones, and *vice versa*. Specifically *discursive* practices — the ones that really deserve to be called *Sprach*spiele — are characterizable alike as those in which some performances have the significance of making claims and those in which some serve as reasons for others. He urges that the same co-ordinate, non-reductive status be acknowledged for the case of *inference* and *representation*, pointing out, quite correctly, that there can be no inference properly so-called without representation. I think these phenomena — assertion, inference, representation — do come as a package, but that there are nonetheless important

insights to be gained by exploiting asymmetries concerning various explicative paths through this constellation. The representationalist tradition has thought of assertion as putting something forward as a fact (and of judging as taking something to be a fact). And in its bottom-up way, it has thought of facts as representations of (in the purest form, pictures of) states of affairs: objects standing in relations. This is alright for "The cat is on the mat", a bit strained for "Helsinki is the capital of Finland", and substantially less helpful for "Freedom is better than slavery". Even after Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* showed how to get over the difficulties Russell's logical atomism had had with *negative* and *conditional* facts, *probabilistic*, *modal*, and *normative* facts remained basically beyond the pale of this approach to propositional content. Just how is one saying that objects are related to one another in saying how things probably or possibly are, or how they ought to be? Thinking of propositional contents in the first instance as what can both serve as and stand in need of reasons, that is, as what can play the role both of premises and conclusions of inferences offers a way out of this metaphysical dead-end. For it directs our attention usefully to the distinctive role modal statements play in counterfactual reasoning, and normative ones play in practical reasoning.

Similarly, though *inference* and *representation* are co-ordinate concepts, that fact does not preclude learning something about their relations by explicating one in terms of the other. The representationalist tradition takes an inference to be good in case the situations represented by the premises are included in those represented by the conclusion — either as a matter of contingent fact, or in a stronger sense, in every possible correct application of those representations. On this line, characterizing propositional content in representational terms underwrites a characterization in inferential terms. The main point of the second half of *MIE* is to show how, beginning with a characterization of propositional content wholly in terms of inferential role, it is possible to elaborate on that basis a characterization in terms of representational content. Insofar as the argument succeeds, it shows that there can be no inferential content without representational content: that neither the inferential and representational dimensions of conceptual content can be present without the other. But the aim of Chapters 5–8 of *MIE* is to say (to make explicit) in inferential terms what that representational dimension is, by specifying the inferential roles of the representational and intentional locutions that make it explicit: terms such as 'true' and 'refers', and 'of' and 'about'. (Knell's essay in this volume offers a good account of this bit of the story.) Explicitly inferential talk turns out to be implicitly representational. By explicating the use of the representational terminology by means of the inferential terminology, we gain a better understanding of what we are *doing* when we think and talk about what we are thinking and talking *about*. The stark opposition McDowell assumes between taking concepts

to "come in a package, each intelligible partly in terms of the others", on the one hand, and "conforming to a foundational structure", on the other, is too limited to be an exhaustive characterization of the possibilities. Even where *reduction* is not possible, *explication — expressing* the content of one vocabulary by the use of another — can be. And it is one of the tasks of *MIE* to make explicit a useful sense of "making explicit": to *say* in one vocabulary what is *implicit* in the *use* of another.

McDowell frames his essay as a series of criticisms of the *motivations* I offer for the direction of pragmatic and semantic explanation pursued in *MIE*. He notes that in the past I have responded to these by saying that the issue of why, in advance of seeing the details of the project, one might think it a promising one is not of the first importance. For in the end, it should be judged retrospectively on what illumination it actually turns out to provide. The point is not what he calls the 'advertisement' (reasons to read the rest of the book), but the product. This is the "proof is in the pudding" response. He says that it would be in order if *MIE* actually delivered a semantic account in inferentialist terms. His most serious criticism is implicit in his claim that it has not — that there is no "pudding" to be assessed. His principal reason for denying that it has been shown that any significant semantic work can be done in inferentialist terms is his contention that the practices of keeping score on commitments and entitlements and their relations that is related in Chapters 3 and 4 do not suffice to get any intelligible notion of inference, assertion, or (therefore) conceptual content in play. For all that is specified there, he thinks, the practices involved could be *just* a game, involving no genuine claiming or reasoning, no saying how things are at all. In effect, he thinks the practices described there are just a *shadow* of genuine discursive practice, with only as-it-were inferences connecting mock claims. Since genuine conceptual contents, purporting to say how things objectively are, are not successfully put in play to begin with, no amount of formal elaboration of the imitation contents later on can make them real.

This criticism goes to the very heart of the enterprise. So it is important to be clear about how that enterprise is understood to proceed. In the final chapter of *Articulating Reasons* (unpacking some of the claims of Chapter Eight of *MIE*), I argue that any practices recognizable as a game of giving and asking for reasons — and hence (since it is not contested that these phenomena come as a package) as one that accords any performances the significance of being claims or assertions, that is, items with *propositional* content — must involve practically distinguishing between two kinds of normative status: commitments and entitlements. For making a claim must make a difference to what the speaker is committed to, and must have the practical significance both of making the claim available to serve as a reason for other claims, and make the speaker liable to assessment as to the reasons she has for it — that is, whether and how she is entitled to the claim. Keeping

practical track of those two kinds of normative status involves distinguishing which commitment-undertaking performances have other commitments as their consequences, and which further commitments they entitle one to and preclude entitlement to. The basic transition from this normative scorekeeping pragmatics to a basic inferential semantics is then made by the claim that corresponding to these consequential relations are genuine inferential relations among what now show up as the *contents* of the claims (the claimables expressed by the claimings):

i. commitment-preserving inferences, which are a generalization (from the domain of formal to that of material inferences) of *deductive* inferences;
ii. entitlement-preserving inferences, which are a generalization (from the domain of formal to that of material inferences) of *inductive* inferences;
iii. incompatibility entailments, a generalization of *modal* inferences. (Two claims are incompatible in the deontic scorekeeping sense in case *commitment* to one precludes *entitlement* to the other. One incompatibility entails another just in case everything incompatible with the conclusion is incompatible with premise.)

For the things (corresponding to equivalence classes of possible performances) that stand in these relations induced by consequential scorekeeping relations to be recognizable as *conceptual* contents, it is claimed, they must also be caught up in three other kinds of practices: *testimonial* inheritance of entitlement to commitment (in which one interlocutor's assertions count as available to serve as reasons for another's), attributions of entitlement as the result of *reliability* inferences concerning language-entry moves in observation (in which the circumstances in which the one taken to be a reliable reporter comes to acknowledge a commitment are taken to entitle him to it), and *practical* inferences (in which commitments entitle interlocutors to non-linguistic performances).

The big, bold claim that ties together the two halves of *MIE* is that when the commitments and entitlements that have been argued to be a *necessary* feature of practices recognizable as involving giving and asking for *reasons* (and hence, assertions, which are what can both be given as reasons and have reasons demanded for them) are elaborated in this practical-consequential structure, the result is *sufficient* for genuinely *discursive* (that is, *conceptual*) practice: that the performances should count as *assertions* and the moves as *inferences*. This is the claim that McDowell rejects. As far as he can see, practices with this structure could be *just* a (non-competitive) game. (I'm not sure I see the relevance of the possibility that Martians might take it to be only such a game. The question is whether or not such a response would be a *mis*-understanding.) And he is certainly right that it is not enough to justify that claim just to start *calling* what goes on there 'assertion'

and 'inference'. But although I do start using those words already in Part One, the *justification* for using them is supposed to be provided by Part Two. For the task of Part Two is to start only with the raw materials provided by Part One — that is, only with 'inference' and 'assertion' insofar as those concepts are underwritten by the three kinds of proto-inferential consequential relations among normative statuses (together with the other sorts of interpersonal status inheritance) — and seeing how much recognizably *linguistic* and *conceptual* structure can be elaborated solely on that basis. That is the "pudding" in which the proof is supposed to be found. The test of whether what has been constructed *is* genuine inference-and-assertion is the feasibility of the "collapse of levels" described in Chapter Nine: whether the utterances of a community meeting the conditions in question could be mapped onto our own so as to make conversation possible (a version of Davidsonian interpretability).

Now McDowell's response is that if what we start with is not really inference-and-assertion, then what is built on that basis is not really, say, singular terms. He does not deny in that connection that my account of what it is to function semantically as a singular term, appealing to substitution inferences, is adequate. But that story is only relevant to the story of Part One if what is constructed there counts as *inference*. And that he denies. Further, it is only on the basis of those prior claims that I can be in a position to appeal to inference without having yet gotten representation on board — since the fact that Part One does not appeal to representational locutions is the *only* warrant for the claim that one could be entitled to the raw materials of the account of singular terms (notions of inference and substitution) without already having to presuppose the applicability of representational locutions. If the conceptual raw materials provided by Part One are only *as-it-were* inferences, then what is later defined in terms of them are only *as-it-were* singular terms: shadows, not the real thing.

My response to this is that while it is true that I am not in a position to *show* the Davidsonian interpretability of practices meeting the conditions laid out in Part One, a *great* deal of the structure that would have to be exhibited for such interpretability *is* on offer. The variety of linguistic-conceptual-logical structure that the apparatus is shown to 'mimic' makes it *extremely* implausible that it is all just a *shadow* of conceptual content. We have *as it were*:

- Conditionals and negation (Ch. 2);
- Language entry moves in perception (Ch. 4);
- Language exit moves in agency (Ch. 4);
- Normative vocabulary (Ch. 4);
- Semantic vocabulary mimicking 'true' and 'refers' (Ch. 5);
- Singular terms and predicates (Ch. 6);

- Identity locutions, anaphoric initiators and dependents, hence deictic expressions, pronouns, bound variables and variable-binding operators such as quantifiers (Ch. 7, and Ch. 5);
- Proper names (Ch. 8);
- Object-dependent indexicals such as 'I' (Ch. 8);
- Propositional attitude ascriptions, including the distinction between ascriptions *de dicto* and *de re* and all arbitrarily iterated combinations of them (Ch. 8);
- Explicitly representational locutions such as 'of' and 'about' (Ch. 8).

It beggars belief that one could reproduce all this structure and not have genuine conceptual contents in play, but a mere shadow of them, a mere *game* that does not involve actually *saying* anything, but nonetheless exhibits all of this structure. If something is missing here, it is something *magical* — for this complaint is like that of the solipsist who insists that whatever *behavior* other humans might exhibit, it is nonetheless not accompanied by what *he* has: a *mind*. If showing the broadly inferential role of all of these locutions is not producing the pudding, what *could* count as doing so?

Notice that the logical locutions that are introduced in Part Two, based on the spare inferential notion of content introduced in Part One have as their expressive job making explicit various aspects of conceptual content. If that is not what the expressions introduced in Part Two do (that is, if they don't serve to make conceptual content explicit because there is no such content in play), then what *are* they doing? How could expressions behave so much like logical locutions and not have that expressive role? But if that *is* their expressive role, then there must be contents in play for them to work on. So, for example, if the conditional and negation introduced in terms of pragmatic incompatibility really *are* a conditional and negation — letting us *say that* two claimables are inferentially related as premise and conclusion, or that they are incompatible — then what those locutions work on must be genuine propositional contents — what appears embedded as the antecedent of the conditional, or is negated. So McDowell has to claim that these are not *really* conditional and negation locutions. And a similar point goes through for the 'singular terms' and 'predicates' distincta, the 'identity' locutions, and so on. If those really *are* the logical locutions they purport to be, then the contents they operate on and explicate must be genuinely conceptual contents. But if *not*, how is it that they can behave so much like those locutions in their own inferential expressive behavior? The justification for the claim that what is underwritten by the consequential relations implicit in practices of keeping score on commitments and entitlements are genuinely *inferential* relations (of the three flavors mentioned above) is just that the (as-it-were) inferential roles of so many kinds of expressions playing essential expressive roles in natural (and artificial) languages can be

elaborated solely on that basis. The extent to which crucial characteristic features of linguistic expressions of many different categories can be reproduced is the best possible reason to conclude that the (mere) intuition that the scorekeeping practices on which they are based could have the complex consequential structure of commitment and entitlement inheritance described, while still being *just* a game, conferring no genuine conceptual contents on items suitably caught up in it — the intuition on which McDowell relies — is mistaken.

McDowell (in company with some of our other authors) takes issue with another explanatory asymmetry asserted in the book, another portrayal of a semantic layer-cake where he sees only the prospect of a homogeneous mixture. This is the claim that we can make sense of creatures who are *rational*, in the sense that they make claims and give and ask for reasons for them (engage in practices of assertion-and-inference), but are not yet *logical*, in that *all* the inferences they endorse are *material* inferences and no expressions are yet in use that play the inference-explicitating role characteristic of *logical* vocabulary. On this issue, I think there is room for genuine philosophical debate and disagreement. One of the principal virtues of *MIE*, it seems to me, is the number of questions of this general shape that its constructive methodology raises — quite apart from the virtues of the stands it takes on those issues. Can there be implicitly normative practices of attributing and undertaking commitments without there being specifically *conceptual* norms in play? (*MIE*: Yes.) Can there be normative *statuses* (such as commitment and entitlement, responsibility and authority) apart from any normative *attitudes* (of taking or treating individuals in practice *as* committed or entitled, responsible or authoritative? (*MIE*: No.) Can there be *conceptual* norms in play in a situation in which there are no speech acts with the significance of *assertions*? (*MIE*: No.) Can there be autonomous linguistic/conceptual/discursive practices that do not include *inference*? (*MIE*: No.) Is every *inferentially* articulated speech act *conceptually* contentful? (*MIE*: Yes.) Can there be *inferential* practices that do not include the use of *logical* vocabulary? (*MIE*: Yes.) Can there be implicit *attribution* of normative statuses without the vocabulary needed explicitly to *ascribe* those statuses? (*MIE*: Yes.) Can there be *deixis* without *anaphora*? (*MIE*: No.) Can there be implicit conceptual norms (including practical ones) without the *normative* vocabulary needed to make them explicit? (*MIE*: Yes.) Is what is made explicit by the use of *modal* vocabulary always already implicit in the use of ordinary, nonlogical expressions? (*MIE*: Yes.) Could there be *propositional* contents expressed by *sentences* without sub-sentential expressions? (*MIE*: Yes.) Could there be languages without the means to make *existential* commitments explicit? (*MIE*: Yes.) And so on.

Many of these claims have the same form: although as a matter of *methodology*, we *understand* what is implicit in what can be *done* only in terms of the possibility of making it explicit in what can be *said*, nonetheless in general the implicit capacity to *do* what one must do in order to count as *saying* anything can precede the capacity explicitly to *say* what it is that one is doing. Explicit sayings are to be seen as built on top of an antecedent layer of doings in which what is said remains as-yet implicit. This methodological approach invites an unusual enterprise: demolishing Neurath's boat at sea. The challenge is to see how much of ordinary discursive practice one can detach and throw overboard without sinking the vessel — that is, without so denuding it as to render it unrecognizable as a *discursive* practice, one in which one can make *claims*, *say* how things are, make something *explicit*, assess *reasons* for what one says and does. The stripped-down skeleton of practices that survives as necessary to remain afloat as minimally discursive is unlike our own in many important ways; the loss of semantic self-consciousness that goes with the various forms of expressive impoverishment is radical and significant. But it is illuminating to break it down, and see how the impoverishment consequent upon not having, say, singular terms, is closely related to that resulting from not having conditionals, but quite different from what one misses without attitude-ascribing locutions, modal, or normative vocabulary. It deserves to be controversial whether the minimal discursive practices *MIE* invites us to consider really are intelligible, and whether, if so, they deserve to be seen as involving *claiming* and *reasoning*. McDowell doubts that they are. But these are issues it is worth worrying about, and *MIE* at least gives us a new way of framing and addressing them.

Rational but not yet logical creatures, the claim is, would be able rationally to criticize and revise their *doxastic* commitments, on the basis of inferential connections among them (including relations to those they find themselves with non-inferentially), but would be unable to criticize and revise those *inferential* connections themselves. They could *change* their concepts, but not give and demand *reasons* for doing so — since that requires at least being able to *say that* one endorses a certain inferential connection, and so that one be able to deploy conditional locutions. McDowell doubts that any such practioners should be counted as making *inferences* at all. Semantic *consciousness*, sapience in the sense of applying *concepts*, for him requires the semantic *self*-consciousness afforded only by the use of logical locutions. He may be right. But I do not see that the description of less-capable creatures stuck at a lower level is unintelligible, and what they would be doing has important features in common with full-blooded assertion-and-inference. The question of what sort of content (if not propositional) they *would* be conferring on their utterances seems to me an important one.

McDowell's objection to seeing logical vocabulary as an in-principle-optional superstructure erected on the basis of a more primitive constellation of practices of deploying non-logical vocabulary relies on independently motivated philosophical considerations (in particular, lessons associated with Kant). Daniel Laurier, in the course of an admirably clear and concise rehearsal of some of the darker doctrines of *MIE*, raises a sophisticated, original *internal* objection to the claim that locutions such as 'claims' and 'believes' — which allow the explicit ascription of propositional attitudes — can be seen as a potentially late-coming development of an antecedent practice in which attitudes of acknowledging and attributing commitments (normative statuses) can be *adopted*, but not yet themselves *attributed*. The objection arises in the course of examining a more general issue: the apparent collision of two methodological requirements. Normative statuses (paradigmatically, the propositionally contentful commitments acknowledged by assertions), it is claimed, are instituted by normative attitudes of attributing and acknowledging them. If, at the most basic level, these are construed as themselves propositional attitudes (Laurier's "conceptually contentful"), then the account seems circular. If, on the other hand, they are not so construed, it seems mysterious how they could institute conceptually contentful normative statuses. ("At the most basic level", because once explicit attitude-ascribing locutions are introduced into an already up-and-running discursive practice (rational, but not yet along that dimension logical), it seems clear that attitudes and statuses can alike be thought of as conceptually contentful.)

The general response to this worry has already been indicated in discussing McDowell. In the most primitive discursive scorekeeping practice, what one is practically attributing (taking or treating another as exhibiting) is commitment to a kind of *doing* that need *not* yet be characterized in terms of its conceptual content: *consequential* commitment, for instance, to acknowledgingly-uttering 'q' if one acknowledgingly-utters 'p' (and is suitably queried or otherwise prompted). This, the claim is, is a kind of practical attitude that belongs in a box with others that can evidently be adopted by non-concept-users, who can practically take or treat someone to be consequentially committed for instance to bringing back a bit of meat for others if the hunt is successful. If these consequential relations between commitments, and those between entitlements, and those relating commitments to entitlements, have the right structure, then practically treating each other as having such consequential statuses *is* in fact (if the theory is right) attributing *propositionally* (hence conceptually) contentful commitments — even though one does not yet have the *concept* of doing so and so cannot yet be *aware* of oneself *as* doing that (and won't be until one has at least ascriptional locutions, conditional locutions, and normative locutions on board). In the most primitive case, to adopt scorekeeping attitudes is

not yet to adopt *intentional* attitudes, except in the minimal sense of practical attitudes that are directed at others. They are only implicitly, and not explicitly, propositional attitudes, that is, attitudes towards conceptual contents.

In the course of considering this general question, however, Laurier raises a much more specific worry: whether the account of the *objectivity* of conceptual commitments — that *what* one is committed to, the *content* of one's conceptual commitments, is not determined by *anyone's attitudes*, not one's own, nor those of the whole community — applies to the primitive-rational case of creatures who can practically *attribute* commitments, but not yet explicitly *ascribe* them, that is, *say* that they are doing that (attributing commitments). For the claim is made in *MIE* that the capacity to attribute *attitudes*, rather than *statuses* — take someone not just to be committed, but to *attribute* commitments, not just keep score on her, but take her to be herself a scorekeeper — is a *logical* capacity, in that it depends on the availability of explicitating *ascriptional* locutions. Here the threat to the intelligibility of the pre-logical but still discursive practices comes in effect from Davidson's argument in "Thought and talk": To be a believer, he argues, one must have the *concept* of belief, at least in the sense that one treats beliefs as the sort of thing that can be true or false independently of one's own commitment to what is believed. One must acknowledge some standard of assessment of the correctness of beliefs beyond the fact that one is oneself committed to them. The discussion of this sort of objectivity in Chapter 8 of *MIE* is conducted in terms of the *de dicto* and *de re* ascriptions that make explicit the differences of scorekeeping perspective that ultimately underwrite the account of what it is in this sense to treat one's commitments as answering to objective (attitude-transcendent) standards. Laurier doubts that account can be translated into the terms available in the pre-ascriptional phase.

From one point of view, as he notes, it would not be a big problem if he were right. The claim that ascriptional locutions are in-principle late-coming expressions that make explicit features of practices intelligible as autonomously discursive in advance of their introduction could be acknowledged to be mistaken without upsetting the general methodology or architectonic of the project. But Laurier has constructed here a clear argument, based only on other commitments acknowledged in *MIE*, for an important case of the first-rational/discursive-then-logical layer-cake picture McDowell objects to much more generally. So it is important to consider Laurier's objection. There is no incompatibility (as he seems to think) between the claim that ascriptional locutions have the expressive role of making explicit what is implicit in practical attributions, on the one hand, and that introducing them gives their users new expressive capacities. For the first claim just requires first that the capacity to use them depends on no capacities one does

not already have in engaging in the non-logical practices on which they are based, and second that once they are introduced they let one *say* what it is that one was then *doing*. Being able to say what before one could only do may bring many further capacities with it. Thus, in the index case that McDowell cares most about, if I can sort inferences into materially good and bad ones, and make assertions, I can do everything I need to in order to introduce conditional assertions, to which I'm committed just in case I endorse the corresponding inferences, and whose endorsement commits me to the goodness of those inferences. But once I've got such locutions, I can now *criticize* inferential commitments, giving and asking for reasons for *them*.

The key demand that Laurier properly makes is rather that we be able to say what it is for someone without access to ascriptional locutions to "be able to make (*in practice*, since *ex hypothesis* no ascriptional locution is yet available) a distinction between what he takes someone else to be committed to and what this someone takes himself to be committed to". Laurier immediately paraphrases this "that is to say, between the commitments he attributes to someone and the commitments he takes to be *acknowledged* by this someone". Since acknowledging a commitment is adopting an *attitude* toward it, this would indeed require an attitude toward an attitude — attributing an acknowledgment — which is what it is claimed one cannot do in the absence of ascriptional locutions (which permit that, since one can attribute an attribution by attributing commitment to an ascription). But it is enough that I can distinguish between the commitment I attribute to X and what X is in fact committed to. Thus attributing *knowledge* is doing three things (corresponding to the three elements of the justified true belief account of knowledge): attributing a commitment (corresponding to the belief condition), attributing an entitlement (corresponding to the justification condition), and *undertaking* the commitment myself (corresponding to the truth condition). These are all attitudes toward *statuses* (of commitment and entitlement), not toward *attitudes*. Since each interlocutor can adopt all these statuses, each one can take it that someone else is committed to something that, though they may be entitled to that commitment, is not *true*. That doing this requires comparing commitments one *attributes* to those one *undertakes* is the distinction of social perspective that is the practical basis of the institution of a dimension of *objective* correctness into the assessment of commitments. In this way, each pre-ascriptional interlocutor has the wherewithal to distinguish in practice between what someone is committed to and what is correct (true). Ah, but since he does not by hypothesis yet have the explicit *concept* of truth or objective correctness (since, as Sellars put it, "grasp of a concept is mastery of the use of a word", and he doesn't have the use of the relevant ascriptional words), can he apply this distinction *to himself*? He can *in effect* distinguish

between attitude and status for others (only "in effect", since he does not have the concept of an attitude until he can not only attribute and acknowledge but ascribe statuses), but how can he do that in his own case? This will be possible if he can *attribute* to himself different commitments than he *acknowledges*. This is evidently possible when he changes his mind, alters the commitments he acknowledges; the distinction between past and present commitments admits the implicit distinction of social perspective between status and attitude. But can we make sense of the pre-ascriptional deontic scorekeeper applying his practical distinction between status and attitude to his own *current* commitments? I admit that it is hard to see how. And if such an interlocutor cannot do that, what are we to say of the practical conception of objectivity of conceptual content that he exhibits? Is it robust enough to meet Davidson's condition on having anything recognizable as beliefs? Have we at this point thrown overboard what turns out to be an absolutely essential component of Neurath's boat and left ourselves with nothing that deserves to count as a *discursive* (that is, concept-using) practice?

If I understand the thrust of Peter Grönert's final concern it is that the account of the practical-inferential role of normative vocabulary in Chapter Four does not jibe with the use made of normative vocabulary in the account of deontic scorekeeping that is the framing theory within which that account is given. Since *MIE* aspires to expressive completeness — specifying in terms of the theory the conceptual contents of the expressions used in expounding the theory — this would be a failure to meet acknowledged criteria of adequacy. It is true that the account of normative vocabulary does not explicitly deal with 'commitment' (either of the doxastic or the practical sort), or 'entitlement', addressing instead various senses of 'ought'. But the intent is that the sketch offered there can easily be extended to those cases. In particular, locutions such as "…is practically committed to…", which is offered as functionally analgous to "…intends to…", will be read so as to support the same sorts of inferences to 'shall' (which explicitly acknowledges practical commitments in a way hooked up to non-linguistic activity by reliable differential responsive dispositions) in the first-person case, and 'should' (which attributes such commitments) in the third-person case. So the Chapter Four account does underwrite the inferences Grönert sees going missing. As for the connection to the language of the theory itself, a scorekeeper's acknowledging a commitment (whether doxastic or practical) is to have the same consequences for her behavior — consequences such as in turn acknowledging the inferential consequences of the claim she acknowledges commitment to — and that scorekeeper's attributing a commitment to another similarly has practical consequences for what she takes it that interlocutor should go on to do (is committed to going on to do). The as-it-were practical reasoning (only "as it were" since the scorekeeper need not have the

explicitating concept of *commitment*, and so is not explicitly engaging in practical reasoning) on the part of scorekeepers that is made explicit by the theorist's use of 'commitment' and 'entitlement' is just *consequential* scorekeeping: a matter of what further commitments or entitlements one *shall* or *should* acknowledge or attribute, given that one has acknowledged or attributed some others.

Carlo Penco's "Keeping track of individuals" concludes with the worry that the sort of semantic holism that inevitably goes along with inferentialism leaves us with conceptual contents that are, because of their responsiveness to speakers' collateral beliefs, ever-changing and only rarely and accidentally shareable. This is, of course, a kind of concern familiar already from discussions of the virtues and vices of the semantic holism Quine endorses late in "Two dogmas of empiricism". Two structural features of the way the account in *MIE* differs from Quinean holism address this issue. First, concepts are thought of as public norms by which speakers bind themselves by using words whose significance is not up to them. It is up to me whether I call the coin copper, but if I do, it is not up to me that I have committed myself to its melting at 1083.4° C — and I do not need to *know* that I have undertaken that commitment in order to have done so. Thus you and I may have quite different collateral beliefs about copper, and still be using the same concept, still binding ourselves by the same inferential norms when we use the word. The second feature of the account then concerns the relations between different speakers and hearers potentially idiosyncratic *understandings* of the common conceptual contents they deploy. Although the same things *do* follow from my calling something 'copper' and your calling it 'copper', we may be disposed to draw quite different conclusions from our claims, and to accept quite different sorts of evidence for or against them. It is these differences in social perspectives on the common content that are expressed explicitly in the *de re* and *de dicto* styles of propositional-attitude ascription. The capacity to characterize the contents of claims from these two different perspectives is the explicitation of what is implicit in the fundamental practical ability to navigate between different doxastic points of view: to keep two sets of books on each interlocutor, and move more or less smoothly back and forth between what each one is *really* (whether she knows it or not) committed to, and what she merely *takes* herself to be committed to. The fact that the very same commitment can have its content specified either *de re* or *de dicto* shows that there is one conceptual content shared by both speaker and scorekeeper, but specifiable differently, depending on the doxastic perspective each occupies. The measure of the success of this perspectival account of what is and isn't shared by different interlocutors is the extent to which the account of *de re* and *de dicto* propositional-attitude ascriptions is adequate to *their* contents.

The principal sort of defective discourse that *MIE* addresses is concepts that are defective, according to a scorekeeper, in that the inference from their circumstances of application (committive or permissive) to their consequences of application (committive or permissive) is not a good one. The claim is that one of the basic functions of logical vocabulary is to make it possible for such implicit inferential commitments to be made explicit in the form of claims (paradigmatically, conditional claims), whose own evidential credentials can then be queried. Kevin Scharp thinks that when further kinds of defective discourse are considered, the counsel of wisdom is to adjust the basic model of scorekeeping in various ways, so as to incorporate at the ground-level the critical and conversational mechanisms by means of which we cope with such defects. I applaud his extension of the apparatus. It will be interesting to compare in detail what can be done in his terms with what logical vocabulary makes room for.

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