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STENIUS ON MEANING
(with additional remarks about Lewis and Katz)

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(in [7] and [8])

Professor Stenius has defended an account that he traces to Wittgenstein's Investigations[1] according to which the meaning of a sentence is determined by two components. One component, "the radical", "shows that state of affairs (real or imagined) that the sentence describes" and the other - the "modal" component - "indicates which function the presentation of this state of affairs has in the language game" ([7] p. 161). The function indicated by the modal component is called the "mood" of the sentence. For example the following three sentences:

1. You live here now.
2. Live here now!
3. Do you live here now?

are said to have the same radical (showing the state in which the listener lives in the place indicated by the speaker) but to indicate three different moods, viz., the indicative, the imperative and the yes-no

interrogative. The meaning of a sentence is determined by the meaning of its radical and by its mood.[2] A radical's meaning is just the state of affairs it pictures. A mood's meaning is indicated by a rule of language use. Stenius proposes the following rules as characteristic of the indicative, imperative and yes-no interrogative moods, respectively ([8] pp 196, 202. Here and below we have changed the labels of Stenius's rules to conform with the nomenclature of this paper.)

RInd. Produce a sentence in the indicative mood only if its sentence radical is true.

RImp. React to a sentence in the imperative mood by making the sentence radical true.

RInt. Answer a question in the yes-no interrogative mood by 'yes' or 'no' according as its sentence radical is true or false.

In this paper I shall not try to establish or refute Professor Stenius's account, but rather pose and discuss a number of questions that I believe must be answered before an account of this kind can be evaluated. In the course of so doing I will compare Professor Stenius's account with a couple of its contemporary rivals.

1. Is Professor Stenius's account a conceptual analysis or a part of a theory of language?

Philosophers who have written about meaning have been engaged in at least two distinguishable enterprises: that of giving an analysis to clarify our understanding of an antecedently held concept and that of choosing a theoretical entity that can play a useful role in a simple and comprehensive theory of language. In the first case one is reporting

the conventional sense of the word 'meaning', in the second one is stipulating a new sense. The standards by which accounts of meaning should be judged depend on the enterprise of which they are a part. Ordinary language tests, for example, like whether the account makes sense of such locutions as "the meaning of life" or "the meaning of Nixon's visit to China" cut no ice if one is not interested in linguistic or conceptual analysis. The same is true of claims that "meanings" are obviously not things of one category or another, e.g., that they are not sets of possible worlds, psychological states or material objects. On the other hand, considerations of elegance and economy are of little importance for analyses. If the analysans is not faithful to the analysandum, the analysis is simply wrong.

A good theory of language, of course, will be faithful to *some* of our pretheoretic semantic intuitions. For example, we would expect it to respect our judgements about when sentences are meaningless or truthvalueless or ambiguous. These intuitions are generally clearer and more deeply rooted than our intuitions about the nature of meaning. It is possible to defend a theory that violates even some of these judgements, however, on the grounds that it has greater scope or simplicity than its competitors. For example, David Lewis in [6] defends a theory on which non-declarative sentences like "Be late!" have truth values. In general, it is harder to refute a theory sketch than an analysis. The best that can usually be said is that the sketch seems unpromising, or inferior to its competitors.

2. Can the mood/radical analysis be extended to other kinds of sentences?

According to the theory defended by David Lewis in [6] all sentences have an underlying declarative base.[3] Lewis says of Stenius's theory that:

> "It works well for declaratives, imperatives and yes-no questions. It is hard to see how it could be applied to other sorts of questions or to sentences like 'Hurrah for Porky'." ([6], p207)

In fact, with a little imagination, one can imagine various extensions of Stenius's theory. One might allow radicals to "picture" objects as well as states of affairs, for example, and add to the list of moods an "emotive" mood and a "place interrogative" mood. The meanings of sentences in the new moods would be indicated by the rules:

REm. Utter a sentence in the emotive mood only if you have the attitude indicated by the modal component of the sentence towards the object named in the radical and you desire that your audience share the attitude.

PRInt. Answer a place interrogative by naming the location of the object denoted or the state of affairs depicted by the radical.

These extensions are, however, considerably less appealing than the original theory. And making them seems to invite making others so that one runs the risk of violating Stenius's sensible warning against "overloading" language with too many moods.

To be fair, it is not clear that Lewis's own ideas apply as plausibly to all sentences as they do to his (and Stenius's) examples. Lewis's treatment requires that all non-declarative sentences be derived via transformations from declarative performative paraphrases of performatively used sentences having "the same base structure, meaning and intension at an index or on an occasion." 1, 2, and 3 do seem to be fairly accurate paraphrases of sentences

1'. You live here now.

2'. I order you to live here now.

3'. I ask if you live here now.

But what performative is synonymous with, say, "Go Big Blue"? I _cheer_ Big Blue wrongly suggests I am pleased with what Big Blue has done thus far. I _encourage_ Big Blue suggests that Big Blue is affected by my action. There is no reason to think that there is a performative that captures the nuances of every non-indicative sentence. Interjections seem to pose particularly difficult problems. What performatives, for example, paraphrase "Ouch!", "Right on!", "Wow!", "Oh no!", "Aw oh!"? Even if a declarative performative that is a fair paraphrase of a non-declarative sentence can be found, one would think there should be some syntactic evidence before we suggest that the one is generated by a _transformation_ of the other.

3. Can the Stenius account explain semantic relations among non-indicative sentences and between indicative and non-indicative sentences?

Jerrold Katz argues in [4] and [5] that no theory that identifies meaning with use can explain the relations between, for example, 1 and 1a, or 2 and 2a, below:

1. I promise to go.

1a. I promised to go.

2. I permit you to use any tool of mine.

2a. I permit you to use any hammer of mine.

The mood/radical theory does not completely identify meaning and use, so Katz's objections might not apply. To explain the connections that Katz is concerned about would require two things. First, the means by which a radical depicts a state of affairs would have to be specified so that one could determine when the picture depicted by one sentence implied (contained?) another. (The possible worlds semantics of Montague and others might be regarded as such specifications if we construe 'picture' broadly.) Second, the rules associated with the modal components would have to be specified in sufficient detail so that one could determine, for example, that permitting the situation in which John is using a tool implies permitting the situation in which John is using a hammer.

Katz's own account, in fact, can be viewed as just such a fleshing out of Stenius's. Like Stenius, Katz finds that sentence meanings have two components. Also like Stenius, Katz maintains that:

1. The indicative mood (or in Katz's terminology the "assertive propositional type") is not privileged. No reduction of all propositional types to a single type is possible, and

2. Remarks of Wittgenstein to the contrary notwithstanding, there is really a fairly small number of propositional types.

Katz goes further than Stenius, however, in attempting to give a complete enumeration and classification of the propositional types. Katz's explanation of the semantic relations among non-indicatives however, is not entirely convincing. Katz argues that logic, as well as semantics, has taken too narrow a view. Just as semantics has shown a bias towards assertions, logic has shown a bias towards preservation of _truth values_. Sentence 2b "follows from" 2a, according to Katz, not because 2a is _true_ if 2b is (both are truthvalueless), but because the _license_ granted by 2a is also license to do the act described in 2b. One promise follows from another if the first is _fulfilled_ whenever the second is. One warning follows from another if the first is _heeded_ whenever the second is. In general, one proposition follows from another (whether they are of the same type or not) if the first has an "inheritance property" of the appropriate kind whenever the second does.

This account does extend traditional logical vocabulary to non-assertive propositions, but it is not clear to me that the generalized notion of "following from" corresponds to any concept shared by speakers of English. The intended subject matter of logic is _arguments_ and

traditional logic agrees fairly well with our intuitions about whether one sentence in an argument "implies", "entails", "follows from" or "is a consequence of" others, or whether one can correctly insert "therefore" before the last sentence in the argument. None of these locutions seem to make sense when used in connections with "arguments" composed of non-declarative sentences.[4] When they are applied to declarative sentences that express what Katz would call non-assertive propositions, they seem to reflect relations that hold among the assertive uses of those sentences. For example, it seems inappropriate to say that "Eat a meal" follows from "Eat breakfast" whereas it does seem appropriate to say that "I request that you eat a meal" follows from "I request that you eat breakfast" and to defend the claim by arguing that it is impossible for the first sentence to be false while the second is true.

In some instances Katz seems to go out of his way to choose inheritance properties that will make the implications between non-assertive propositions jibe with the implications between their assertive counterparts. The most straightforward generalization, for example, would seem to require that permission sentence A "imply" permission sentence B if any act that is licensed by A is also licensed by B.

But this would mean that "I permit you to eat chocolate bars" implies "I permit you to eat candy". On the assertive reading of the sentences, however, the implication holds in the reverse direction. One begins to suspect that Katz may really be thinking in terms of truth values.

There are some examples for which Katz's generalized implication does not coincide with assertive implication, but in these cases it is not clear that intuition supports Katz over traditional logic. "I ask if you are a bachelor" seems to me to imply "I ask if you are married", but since affirmative answerhood is not preserved Katz would deny that the implication holds.

These observations suggest that the logical connections among performatives are best explained by the accounts on which a performative is either derived from an underlying assertion or (as Lewis suggests in [6]) carried out simultaneously with - and by means of the same utterance as - the corresponding assertion.

This does not mean that an account like Lewis envisages is as comprehensive as one like Stenius or Katz defends. By identifying meaning with truth conditions, Lewis guarantees that semantics alone will never, explain how we can, by our sentences, ask questions, grant permissions, make promises. If Lewis's account is to be vindicated it must eventually be supplemented with some explanations, based on plausible principles of human behavior, of why certain sentences are

associated regularly with particular kinds of action.[5]

4. Is Stenius's formulation of the rule associated with the indicative correct?

Whether we consider it part of semantics, as Stenius does, or part of pragmatics, it is clear that a comprehensive theory of language must contain some version of a rule like RInd. As it is not formulated, however, there are many occasions on which rule RInd is not followed, even by speakers who would seem to be otherwise quite skilled in the use of language. A speaker may be misinformed, for example, or deceitful, or perhaps just especially anxious to arouse the interest of his audience. Professor Stenius is aware of this problem and issues the following caveat:

> "If a person plays chess and moves one of his chessmen in a way which is against the rules of chess, we would say that he has not made a 'chess move'. But we cannot make a similar statement about the uttering of a false (indicative) sentence. A false sentence must be considered a move in the language-game of the indicative, though an incorrect move. A false sentence in the indicative will still be called a 'sentence'. So if we say that [RInd] is a semantic rule, this must not be understood to mean that only an utterance which follows the rule [RInd] is a move in the indicative game. In <u>this</u> sense the rule is <u>not</u> semantic." ([8], p 197.)

He then parenthetically adds the following analogy:

> "An incorrect 'move' in a game which is still considered a move in the game may be said to occur in, for instance, poker, where playing falsely is not simply not playing poker." ([8] p 198.)

There is not really any version of poker in which players are permitted to break the rules of the game. By "playing falsely" Professor Stenius presumably means bluffing, which might be cashed out as "violating some strategic guidelines, that, under normal circumstances, it would be rational to follow." Apparently rule RInd is not to be taken as an unbreakable "semantic rule", but rather as a strategy for playing the language game well under normal conditions. This leads one to wonder what the real rules of language are, i.e., what are the rules that we must follow to speak English correctly.

A clearer version of the defense of rule RInd might be to insist that RInd is a genuine rule of language, but one that covers only "veridical English". Once the rules for veridical English are understood, then pragmatic principles will explain how language users deviate from these rules. In fact one could argue that the only way to understand such deviations is by assuming a general understanding of the rules of veridical language.

It seems possible, however, to account for far more linguistic behavior by adopting in place of RInd a rule something like:

RInd'. Utter a sentence in the indicative only if you intend your audience to believe it.

This rule would encompass most of veridical language, misinformed language, deceitful language and some exaggerated language.

There are, of course, some uses of language it would not explain. There is a story, for example, of a crafty dry goods merchant, who would mark twenty-five dollar trousers with tags reading "$75.00". When a customer inquired about the price of a pair of the trousers, he would squint at the tag for a minute or two and declare, "Twenty five dollars". If the customer was sufficiently found of bargains and lacking in scruples, he would buy quickly at the quoted price, thinking himself lucky and clever.

The merchant intended his audience to believe that he believed his utterrance was true. He did not want his audience to believe it was true. Examples like this might lead us to consider the rule:

RInd". Utter a sentence in the indicative only if you intend your audience to believe you believe it.

It seems to me, however, that the merchant's action is better seen as a clever violation of linguistic conventions whose success can be explained on pragmatic grounds. In normal conversation the speaker does not intend to convey information about his own psychological state. He realizes that his audience will make inferences about his beliefs, but his intention is only to have them accept what he says. RInd' is preferable to RInd because it accommodates a greater variety of linguistic practice. RInd" is inferior to RInd' because it is less in accord with our intuition about speaker's intentions.

One might object to RInd' on the grounds that its plausibility rests on the general acceptance of a more "fundamental" rule, like RInd. On this account an utterance of "John lives here" disposes an audience to believe that John lives here because it is known that rule RInd is generally followed. Realizing this, we know to utter "John lives here" when we want to induce the belief. It seems to me, however, that indicatives would induce belief even if it were accepted only that RInd' is generally followed. Mary says to me, "John lives here". I reason: Mary intends for me to believe John lives here. Mary has no reason to wish me to acquire false beliefs on this matter. So John probably does live here. My reasoning, of course, requires much more than the knowledge that linguistic rules are being followed. But this is as it should be. Indicatives induce belief only under appropriate conditions. No matter how meticulous his language, a speaker is likely to be disbelieved if he is known to be disposed to induce false beliefs (with or without language). In a community where everyone gratuitously tried to mislead his fellows, indicative language would probably be impossible.

The best defense of RInd against RInd' might be one based on overall simplicity of the resulting theories of language. One might feel that many uses of indicatives (ironic, exaggerated, fictional, metaphorical) can be explained in a simple and uniform way as deviations from RInd and that RInd' could not play this kind of theoretical role. But the

vindication of this feeling would require a serious exploration of the alternatives.

Professor Stenius would probably not care for the psychological element that has been incorporated in RInd'. He himself briefly considers replacing RInd with a <u>stronger</u> rule requiring that for an indicative to be correctly used the sentence-radical must be true and that the speaker must, "in addition, know that it is true, or have good reasons for thinking it is true, or at least believe that it is true". He rejects this argument, however, because of a general distaste for "subjective factors" in semantics and because of two specific arguments:

> "...I would answer that it would be unnatural to think that the language norm which mediates an objective communication would take into consideration purely subjective factors. If the criterion of correctness for uttering an indicative were one of those mentioned, the 'meaning' of a sentence in the indicative with a given descriptive content must be different according to who the speaker is - and this can scarcely be reasonable. And independently of this: A sentence like 'it is raining' must have a meaning which is different from the meanings of the sentences 'I believe that it is raining', or 'I know that it is raining'."([illegible] 199-200)

The specific arguments are not convincing. The meaning of a sentence is said to be indicated by the rule associated with its mood and the state of affairs depicted by its radical. Neither of these changes from speaker to speaker. The rule "Use an indicative only if you intend your audience to believe that the state of affairs depicted by its radical obtains" is still the same rule no matter whom it is applied to. Furthermore the situations depicted by the radicals of "I believe it is raining", etc., are not the same as the states depicted by the radical of "It is raining". So the meanings of the sentences are not the same. It might turn out that RInd' would dictate that "It is raining" and "I believe it is raining" are

appropriate to use on the same occasions. (Actually, I doubt this. Those occasions on which one intends an audience to believe a fact about the world are not the same as those when one intends them to believe some fact about oneself.) The meanings of the utterances, however, are clearly different.

I am sympathetic to Professor Stenius's general feeling that semantics should be objective. The neatest organization for a science of language would seem to be one in which questions about language in the abstract are separated from questions about the psychological conditions of language users. But if one insists that use _is_ meaning (or a component of meaning) and that semantics is the study of meaning, then incorporating psychological elements into semantics would seem unavoidable. For the way we use language does depend on our intentions.

NOTES

* This paper has benefitted from the comments of Wayne Davis, Uwe Moennich, Anthony Ungar, and the referee.

1. Jerrold J. Katz ([3]) points out that a very similar idea was suggested by Frege in [2]: "An interrogative sentence and an indicative one contain the same thought: but the indicative contains something else as well, namely, the assertion. The interrogative sentence contains something more too, namely a request. Therefore two things must be distinguished in an indicative sentence: the content, which it has in common with the corresponding sentence-question, and the assertion...both are so closely joined in an indicative sentence that it is easy to overlook their separability."

2. Thus Stenius's "mood" determines, in normal contexts, Austin's "illocutionary force." Austin appears to hold that mood should not be regarded as a part of the meaning of the sentence at all, but L. Jonathon Cohen argues convincingly against him in [2] , using the term 'semantic force' for Stenius's 'mood'.

3. 'Declarative' here refers to a syntactic property, 'indicative' to a semantic property. Thus 'I order you to go' is a declarative sentence, but the mood of the proposition expressed is said by some to be imperative, rather than indicative.

4. Wayne Davis has shown me some exceptions to this claim: e.g., "Tennis requires a lot of energy; so (hence, therefore) eat well before a match." Here we seem to have neither preservation of truth values nor preservation of inheritance properties. Perhaps the argument should be taken as elliptical for something like: "To play tennis well requires lots of energy. If you play a tennis match you ought to play well. Having lots of energy at a time requires that you eat well before that time. Therefore, if you play a tennis match you ought to eat well before." The full argument would then preserve truth values.

5. In fact, such explanations have been attempted. Kent Bach, for example, argues in [1] that the activities associated with performatives can be explained just on the assumption that speaker and audience assume the speakers utterrances are true. Katz is not persuaded by Bach's explanation because it contradicts his intuition that performative sentences are not normally assertions and do not have truth values. But to establish that a reduction of all moods to the indicative is _possible_ would seem to me to be a worthy achievement. The one mood theory might be judged superior on grounds of overall simplicity even if it violated the "strong Austinian intuition" that someone who says "I promise" under normal circumstances is not asserting anything.

6. This possibility was suggested to me by Professor Ingmar Poern.

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