PROOF

3

How Rare Is Chairman Mao? Dummett, Frege and the Austere Conception of Nonsense

Sanford Shieh

The Beast had lurked indeed, and the Beast, at its hour, had sprung.
(H. James)

One of the most important sources of the "resolute" approaches to interpreting Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* is a view of nonsense originally developed by Cora Diamond as an interpretation of the views of Frege as well as of the early Wittgenstein. In the seminal papers in which Diamond's interpretation was first set out, Michael Dummett's reading of Frege appears as a foil, a representative of a conception of nonsense opposed to what she calls the "Frege–Wittgenstein" view. In subsequent developments of the resolute approach, primarily in the work of James Conant, this opposition has become known as one between the "substantial" conception of nonsense (hereafter Substantiality) and the Frege–Wittgenstein "austere" conception (hereafter Austerity). Most of this paper is an attempt to assess the true extent of this opposition. I focus mainly on Diamond's two early papers: "Frege and Nonsense" (Diamond, 1991a; hereafter *FN*) and "What Nonsense might Be" (Diamond, 1991b; hereafter *NMB*), and on the parts of *Frege: Philosophy of Language* (Dummett, 1981; hereafter *FPL*) to which resolute interpreters tend to refer in characterizing Dummett's views. My main conclusion, given a fairly leisurely examination of these texts, is that there is in fact much less opposition between Dummett's views and Austerity than is usually supposed. In addition, this examination unearths some commitments of Austerity that are not fully or explicitly acknowledged. Making these commitments clearer points to a tension in Austerity that is avoided by Dummett's, or at any rate a Dummettian view of nonsense.

9781137400697_05_cha03.indd 84 2/11/2015 6:49:00 PM

PROOF

Substantiality vs austerity: initial contrasts

Diamond begins her accounts of the austere view of nonsense by contrasting it with the substantial view. In *FN* the contrast is set up with a question. In "On Concept and Object" Frege writes "what is … said concerning a concept can never be said concerning an object; for a proper name can never be a predicative expression, though it can be part of one. …. The sentence

1. There is Julius Caesar

is neither true nor false but senseless" (1984, p. 189)[1] Diamond's question is: Is it possible to describe this "sentence" "as a putting of an expression for an object – a proper name – where one for a concept should go[? I]s it possible to identify an expression as a proper name when it occurs in the wrong place, or what we want to call that?" (*FN*, p. 73). Dummett's answer to this question, she claims, is yes, referring to his account of the sentence

2. Chairman Mao is rare

in *FPL*. Dummett writes that this sentence, "while perfectly grammatical, is meaningless because 'rare', though in appearance just like a first-level predicative adjective, has the sense of a second-level predicate" (*FPL*, p. 51). Diamond takes this explanation to amount to "the idea … that we get a meaningless sentence when we put a proper name where the argument term should go," that is, (2) result from putting the proper name 'Chairman Mao' in the argument-place (indicated, as Frege does, by 'ξ') of the second-level predicate 'ξ is rare', but logically this is the wrong kind of argument-place for a proper name to occupy. We get a fuller picture of what it is to be in the wrong kind of argument-place in *NMB*, where the contrast between Substantiality and Austerity is set up over the issue whether the sentences

3. Caesar is a prime number

and

4. Scott kept a runcible at Abbotsford

are nonsensical for the same reason. Diamond takes Dummett to hold that they are different types of nonsense, pointing to his notion of logical

9781137400697_05_cha03.indd 85 2/11/2015 6:49:01 PM

PROOF

valency: there are "different categories of expression, governed by rules determining that expressions of certain categories will fit together to form a sentence, while expressions of certain other categories will not" (*FPL*, p. 62). Although Dummett here writes of logical valencies as conditions for forming "sentences," Diamond evidently takes him to have in mind conditions for forming *meaningful* sentences. So, the reason why (3) is not meaningful is that the proper name 'Caesar' and the predicate 'ξ is a prime number' have the wrong logical valencies to fit together meaningfully. Moreover, the reason why these *expressions* have the wrong combinatorial valencies, Diamond suggests, lies in the *meanings* they have. The meaning of 'Caesar' consists at least partly in referring to a person, while the meaning of 'ξ is a prime number' is such that it can be predicated, truly or falsely, only of numbers. The logical categories or types of these meanings, as she puts it, "clash." So all the expressions out of which (3) is composed are meaningful; its meaninglessness is a product of a "category-clash." Presumably the same holds of (2): the argument-place of 'ξ is rare' is the wrong kind of place for 'Chairman Mao' to be because the senses of proper names clash with those of second-level predicates. In contrast, one of the words occurring in (4), 'runcible' has no meaning, and that word's lack of meaning is responsible for (4)'s meaninglessness. That there are nonsensical sentences composed entirely of meaningful expressions, whose nonsensicality results from category-clashes, is one of the main tenets of Substantiality. In *FN* this sort of nonsense is called "well-formed nonsense."

On Diamond's reading, Frege in fact rejects this Substantial position. What Frege's own contrasting austere commitment consists in, as we will see, is not altogether clear. Perhaps it's simply the denial of this Substantialist commitment; that is, every nonsensical sentence contains at least one meaningless sub-sentential expression. But perhaps it's a stronger claim, viz., no sub-sentential part of any nonsensical sentence-like sequence of words has meaning. In any case, the nonsensicality of (3) and (4) don't have different explanations.

There are two other contrasts between Substantiality and Austerity that appear in *FN* and *NMB*. First, Diamond suggests that what makes it possible for Dummett to take (2) to be composed of a proper name and a second-level predicate, and thereby to take it to be an instance of well-formed nonsense, is a conception of sense:

> the sense of a word in a sentence [is] fixed by the general rules determining the sense of the word independently of any context, except in cases of ambiguity, where the rules of the language are not

9781137400697_05_cha03.indd 86 2/11/2015 6:49:01 PM

PROOF

> themselves sufficient to determine the sense the word has in particular sentences. (*FN*, p. 88)

Diamond seems to mean two things by "context." One is the context of the sentence in which a word occurs, call this "sentential context." Another is a looser notion comprising the time or place in which a sentence is uttered or written, the speaker's or writer's intentions in producing the sentence, the nature of the audience addressed, and so on. When necessary, I'll call this "context of utterance." In any case I'll call the Substantial view of sense attributed to Dummett the "context-independent conception of sense"; it is another commitment of Substantiality. The opposing austere position is presumably that the senses of some words are not determined by general rules independent of any sentential context, or perhaps also independent of any context of utterance.

Second, consider again what Dummett says about (2): it is "perfectly grammatical." So Diamond takes Dummett to hold that the grammars of natural languages allow the formation of sentences the logical types of whose parts clash and so are nonsensical. This is a logical defect of ordinary language, which Dummett characterizes as "violat[ions of] distinctions of type" (*FPL*, p. 50). In contrast to natural languages, in Frege's Begriffsschrift, his

"symbolic language, it is *not merely forbidden, but actually impossible*, to violate the distinctions in type" (ibid.). This might be understood, in the terms of the *Tractatus*, 3.325, as the claim that all sentences of Begriffsschrift "obey *logical* grammar – logical syntax."[2] The existence of such a difference between natural languages and Begriffsschrift is the final main tenet of Substantiality. The opposed austere view is that there are no violations of logical syntax, period, neither in natural languages nor in Begriffsschrift.

To sum up, here are the main doctrines of Substantiality:

S1 Some nonsensical or meaningless sentences are composed of expressions with various logical types of senses, which conflict with one another; they have the wrong logical valencies to combine into a thought.
S2 An expression has a sense independent of its occurrence in any sentence.
S3 Natural languages allow grammatically well-formed sentences that are nonsensical because of category clashes; Begriffsschrift does not.

9781137400697_05_cha03.indd 87 2/11/2015 6:49:01 PM

PROOF

The contrasting doctrines of Austerity are:

A1 No sentence is nonsense in virtue of being composed of parts whose senses clash.
  A1(i) Every nonsensical sentence contains at least one meaningless sub-sentential expression, or
  A1(ii) No sub-sentential part of any nonsensical sentence-like sequence of words has meaning.
A2 The senses of some words or sub-sentential expressions are not determined by general rules independent of any sentential context.
A3 There are no violations of logical syntax either in natural languages or in Begriffsschrift.

Frege and logical category shifts

Diamond's case for ascribing the austere conception to Frege begins by pointing out two aspects of Frege's view in "On Concept and Object." Frege writes,

> [L]anguage often uses the same word now as a proper name, now as a concept-word; in …
>
> 5. There is only one Vienna
>
> the numeral indicates that we have the latter. 'Vienna' is here a concept-word, like 'imperial city'. Using it in this sense, we may say:
>
> 6. Trieste is no Vienna (1984, p. 189)[3]

So, first, Frege does not characterize these two sentences as nonsensical. And, second, he takes the word 'Vienna' in these sentences to be concept-words. Presumably he would take 'Vienna' in

> 7. Vienna is east of Jena

to be a proper name. Frege thus sees a "shift in the logical category" of 'Vienna' from its occurrence in (7) to its occurrences in (5) and (6). This shift goes with a shift in the mode of occurrence of 'Vienna'. In (7) it occurs in a (sentential) context where a proper name "would make sense," in (5) and (6) it occurs "in a context in which an expression for a *countable* kind of thing would make sense (where this is shown by an

9781137400697_05_cha03.indd 88 2/11/2015 6:49:02 PM

PROOF

indefinite article, the plural, or a numeral)" (*FN*, p. 74). An expression for a countable kind of thing is a concept-word, a first-level predicate, so this suggests that Frege takes the logical kind of expression a word is, the logical category of a word, to be determined by what is required for the sentence in which it occurs to be meaningful. If, in order for a sentence to make sense, what occurs in some (logical) place in that sentence has to be a concept-word, then that is "a sufficient condition for treating the term as in that context a concept word and the occurrence as a predicative one" (ibid.). It follows that (5) and (6) are not examples of putting a proper name, 'Vienna', in a place where only concept-words can go, because in those sentences 'Vienna' has shifted from being a proper name to being a concept-word.

Moreover, Diamond claims, the logical category shift of 'Vienna' does not require "that there [be] an established use of 'Vienna' as a concept word"; it requires only "that there is an established possibility *in the language* of using what are normally proper names as concept words" (*FN*, p. 74). If "we do not know what it is for something to be a Vienna," sentences (5) and (6) would "still be describable as one[s] in which 'Vienna' has the role of a concept word" (*FN*, p. 75), but this concept word has no specific meaning (yet) in those sentences. Now, if Frege treats "all cases apparently similar [to (5) and (6)]" in the same way, then for Frege

> there would be no such thing as putting an expression into a place where an expression of a different logical category was required. There would instead, in all cases in which it was clear what logical category was required, be expressions whose logical category was clear from the context but whose reference might or might not be fully determined, expressions which in other contexts had a different categorial role and a fully determined reference. We could not then identify 'a proper name in the place where a concept word belongs' as a *proper name*; to speak of such an expression as a proper name at all would only be to refer to *its role elsewhere, or to the role it was intended to serve*. On this view, there would not merely be, as Frege clearly believed, no illogical thoughts (no such combinations of senses), but also no ill-formed sentences (no combinations of expressions violating categorial requirements), even in ordinary language. (*FN*, p. 75; emphases mine)

If Frege does hold this view, does it follow that he rejects Substantiality? Perhaps logical category shifts like that of 'Vienna' are incompatible with the Substantialist thesis S2 of the context-independence of sense, although we will see some reason to doubt this. This view does imply

9781137400697_05_cha03.indd 89 2/11/2015 6:49:02 PM

PROOF

that there are no category-clashes in either of (5) or (6). But this is not enough to show that Frege rejects thesis S1, the existence of category-clash nonsense, since he doesn't take any of these sentences to be nonsense either.

In any case, as Diamond points out, it is not clear that Frege does treat all cases apparently similar to (5) and (6) in the same way. Consider sentence (1), 'There is Julius Caesar', which Frege claims is senseless. It seems that one could take this sentence to be exactly similar to (5) and (6). For, why can't we take 'Julius Caesar' to have shifted to the category of first-level concept expression in (1) from its "normal" category of proper name in, for example

8. Julius Caesar crossed the Rubicon in 49 BC?

Perhaps the reference of 'Julius Caesar' in its concept expression role is just as unclear as what it is for something to be a Vienna. But if even in that case (5) and (6) don't count as nonsense, why does (1)? This asymmetry in treatment leads to what is perhaps the most significant objection to her ascription of Austerity to Frege. For, one hypothesis to account for this asymmetry is that Frege thinks that 'Caesar' in (1) hasn't undergone a category shift from being a proper name, so that its role in (1) clashes with the second-level predicate logical role of 'there is' in (1). It is critical for Diamond's that she gives a different account of this asymmetry. We'll get to that account in the fourth section ('Julius Caesar and argument places') below.

Another important part of Diamond's case for ascribing Austerity to Frege is a reading of his fundamental principle in *The Foundations of Arithmetic*, "never to ask for the meaning of a word in isolation, but only in the context of a proposition" (Frege, 1953, p. xxii),[4] which, following tradition, I'll call the Context Principle (hereafter *CP*). On her reading, *CP* is or implies the thesis that the meaning or meaningfulness of sentences determines the logical types of meanings of their component expressions. This determination, of course, is the key principle underlying category shifts such as those in (5) and (6). We will see in the next section how according to Diamond this determination is supposed to work.

Before we get there I want to consider briefly Diamond's response to another objection, and point to an ambivalence in Diamond's view of the status of (5) and (6).

The objection is against the claim that for Frege there are "no ill-formed sentences (no combinations of expressions violating categorial requirements), even in ordinary language." The problem is that Frege

9781137400697_05_cha03.indd 90 2/11/2015 6:49:02 PM

PROOF

holds that one advantage of his Begriffsschrift over ordinary language is the absence of "ill-formed constructions." Diamond's reply consists of an interpretation of Frege's account of "correctly formed names" in *Basic Laws of Arithmetic*, §28:

> I call a name *correctly* formed if it consists only of such signs that are primitive or introduced by definition, and if these signs are only used as they were introduced to be used, that is, proper names as proper names, names of functions of first-level with one argument as names of such functions, and so on, so that the argument places are always filled with fitting names or markers. (2013, p. 45; emphasis in original)[5]

An incorrectly formed expression, it would seem, is simply one some of whose component expressions are not used as they are introduced or "intended" to be used. Diamond takes this to mean that these component expressions have undergone a logical category shift; their logical categories, in their occurrence in the incorrectly formed complex expression, differ from their intended original logical categories. That is, on this reading what Frege wants to rule out as incorrectly formed are "cross-category equivocations" like (5), assuming that 'Vienna' was originally intended to be a proper name, that is, to be used as it is in (7), and that it's not settled what is the reference of 'Vienna' used as a first-level predicate. The problem with such equivocations, which Frege wanted to avoid, is that since there is no established reference for the predicate 'Vienna', no truth-value would be determined for (5). But there are no category clashes among the component senses of these "incorrectly formed" sentences.

The ambivalence is over whether the sort of case of cross-category equivocation counts as nonsense. Frege of course does not characterize (5) as nonsense, and officially Diamond follows Frege. However, it would seem that if the reference of a word whose logical role has shifted is not fully determined, then we would be in the same position with respect to the sentence containing the logically shifted word as we are with respect to (4), in which 'runcible' has no meaning. Now, in *NMB* Diamond seems to accept that (4) is nonsense. She says, for instance, that "[w]hat makes [(4)] nonsense is not the meaning of the word 'runcible' but its absence of meaning" (p. 97). We saw that if 'Vienna' in (5) and (6) has no reference then these sentences have no truth-value. But Diamond also says, in *FN*, that under these circumstances "'Vienna' would still be a logical part [of (6)] – but it would then lack content,

9781137400697_05_cha03.indd 91 2/11/2015 6:49:02 PM

PROOF

and so would [(6)]" (78). Moreover, in *NMB* she says "that if we defined 'runcible' in a suitable way, we could turn the sentence from nonsense to sense – if for example we defined 'runcible' as a kind of cow or a kind of shop" (p. 97) It seems a parallel point can be made of (6). Can we not give "content" to (6) by defining 'ξ is a Vienna' as true of all and only imperial cities?

All this suggests that Diamond is occasionally attracted by the conception of a kind of nonsense, "weak nonsense" let's call it, that results from shifts in logical category of words, made possible by "the language," from categories in which the words have "usual" or "established" meanings or references, to determinate categories in which they don't have such meanings or references. Weak nonsense conforms to Austerity by not involving category clashes. But, all components of a weakly nonsensical sentence may be identifiable as expressions belonging to various logical categories, and, some, but not all, components of weakly nonsensical sentences may have specific references of the logical type of those components, that is, may be fully meaningful.

Diamond on Frege's Context Principle

Diamond's reading of Frege's *CP* is also set up in opposition to Dummett. Here Dummett's view is itself presented by opposition to Quine's claim that "in Bentham and Frege" one finds a "reorientation in semantics … whereby the primary vehicle of meaning came to be seen no longer in the term but in the statement" (1951, p. 39). Dummett rephrases Quine's "reorientation" as "the doctrine that the unit of significance is not the word but the sentence" (*FPL*, p. 3), and argues that it

> is either truistic or nonsensical: in either case it does not represent any thesis stressed by Frege. …. If the doctrine stated by Quine were taken as involving that the words in a sentence no more carry a meaning of their own than the letters in a word, the doctrine would be absurd, and fly in face of the obvious and crucial fact that we understand new sentences which we have never heard or thought of before …. If the doctrine is taken as consisting merely in the observation that we cannot say anything by means of a sequence of words that stops short of being a sentence …, then it is truistic: for (in a logical rather than a typographical sense) an expression with which we can make a move in the language-game (or 'perform a linguistic act') is precisely what a sentence is. (*FPL*, p. 3)

9781137400697_05_cha03.indd 92 2/11/2015 6:49:02 PM

PROOF

Diamond argues that Quine is right in this dispute: Frege has a view of the priority of sentence meaning over word meaning that is neither obviously false nor truistic. Her argument turns on a passage from *The Foundations of Arithmetic*, §60, where Frege says that "It is enough, if the sentence as a whole has a sense; it is through this that the parts also get their content" (1953, p. 71).[6] Clearly Frege holds here that the parts of sentences have content, and so doesn't accept the absurd view. Yet, the content of those parts somehow derive from the content of the whole sentence, and this is surely not the "truistic" view. Indeed, Diamond claims that "if this means anything at all, it must rule out the combination: senseless whole and parts with content" (*FN*, p. 109). But the question is: how do the parts of a sentence get their contents from the sense of the whole sentence? However this is supposed to work, the account had better be consistent with the "crucial fact"0 noted by Dummett, "that we understand new sentences which we have never heard or thought of before.". This fact, sometime labelled the productivity of understanding, seems to call for an explanation in terms of the compositionality of understanding: that we understand sentences on the basis of knowledge of meaning of their parts and the significance of the way in which the parts are put together. So the major problem in interpreting Frege's views is to address the question, if the "sense of the whole sentence fixes what the parts mean, how could we ever understand new sentences?"

Diamond's answer is this. She holds that grasp of "two kinds of general rule" are necessary for understanding sentences: "one kind enabling us to break down whole sentences into elements with a syntactic characterization, and another sort fixing the meanings of proper names, concept expressions and relational expressions of various sorts" (*FN*, p. 109). Thus, Diamond evidently accepts that the two types of knowledge invoked in a compositional explanation of the productivity of understanding are indeed necessary. However, she holds that these rules don't "apply unconditionally to a given sentence" (*FN*, p. 110). Rather, these rules are applied in two stages, each of which begins by determining what thought is expressed by that sentence. Presumably this means that in understanding a new sentence knowledge of compositional rules is somehow subordinated to figuring out what the thought expressed by the whole sentence is.

Diamond sketches how this is supposed to work with respect to the sentence

9. Venus is more massive than Mercury

9781137400697_05_cha03.indd 93 2/11/2015 6:49:02 PM

PROOF

In the first stage of achieving an understanding of this sentence, the syntactic rules are applied to

> characterize the structure of [(9)], but any such characterization will apply to the sentence only conditionally. Thus the sentence may be taken to be
>
> 10. a two-term relational expression completed by the proper name 'Venus' in the left-hand place and the proper name 'Mercury' in the right-hand place,
>
> *but only if* the thought expressed by the whole sentence is that
>
> 11. the object 'Venus' stands for, whatever that is, has whatever relation it is the relational expression stands for to whatever object it is 'Mercury' stands for. (*FN*, p. 110)

So the syntactic characterization of (9) as (10) depends on determining that the thought expressed by (9) is (11). Presumably this determination is to be achieved by consideration of the context of utterance of (9).

There's an immediate question about this account: can one even conceive of (9) as expressing such a thought as (11), if one doesn't take (9) to be divided into the three expressions 'Venus', 'is more massive than', and 'Mercury'? It's hard to see that one can. So, knowledge of syntactic compositional rules must already play a role in enabling us to determine that (9) expresses (11). Diamond's first stage must then be a bit more complicated than she makes out. A speaker begins understanding a new sentence such as (9) by applying, unconditionally, knowledge of syntactic rules, but this application enables her to discern merely a range of possibilities for dividing (9) into "logical combination of elements" (*NMB*, p. 110), where the elements at this point are *types* of expressions. (10), for example, is at this point merely one possible division of (9); it is a division into two proper names and a relational expression, but it is not yet known what objects these names stand for nor what relation the relational expression. Knowledge of syntactic rules does not suffice to determine which of the possible logical structures of (9) is the one it has in a given context of utterance; only knowledge of features of that context allows us to attain this further knowledge.

In the second stage, starting from a grasp that (9) expresses (11), one can apply one's knowledge of the general rules fixing the meanings of

9781137400697_05_cha03.indd 94 2/11/2015 6:49:02 PM

PROOF

proper names, concept expressions, and so on. This application is also conditional:

> *We may know that the proper name* '*Venus*' *stands for Venus*; our knowledge may now be conditionally applied: the sentence [(9)] is
>
> 12. the proper name 'Venus' *standing for Venus*, in the left-hand place of the relational expression, with the proper name 'Mercury' in the right-hand place,

only if the thought expressed by the whole sentence is that

> 13. *Venus* has whatever relation 'more massive than' stands for to whatever object 'Mercury' means. (*NMB*, p. 110; emphases mine)

The partial semantic characterization of (9) as (12) thus depends on determining that (9) expresses (13). Perhaps one can say that if (9) expresses (13) then (9) expresses a thought about the planet second closest to the Sun in the Solar system. So, what happens in the second stage seems to be this. A speaker reaches this stage knowing the types of the expressions out of which (9) is composed – 'Venus' and 'Mercury' are proper names, 'is more massive than' is a relational expression – and also knowing the meanings or references of those expressions – 'Venus' refers to a certain planet, as does 'Mercury' and 'is more massive than' stands for a specific relation among physical objects. But she is not yet in a position to know that 'Venus', 'Mercury' and 'is more massive than' in (9) stand for these entities. Why not? Because, I take it, someone in this position may have good reason to think, for example, that in the circumstances in which (9) is uttered, the person who produced it is not talking about a planet by using 'Venus'. So, one has first to determine what entities the thought expressed by (9) is about before one can know whether the expressions composing (9) stand for these entities.

Here is presumably how the foregoing account applies to

> 6. Trieste is no Vienna.

We begin, in the first stage, by determining the thought it expresses as the thought that whatever 'Trieste' stands for does not have whatever property (does not fall under the whatever concept) 'ξ is Vienna' or 'ξ is a Vienna' stands for. This allows us to take 'Trieste' in (6) as a proper name and 'ξ is Vienna' (or 'ξ is a Vienna') in (6) to be a predicate, but

PROOF

at this stage we don't yet know which proper name or which predicate. In the next stage we further determine the thought expressed by (6) to be about a certain specific city on the Adriatic coast. We can then bring to bear our knowledge that 'Trieste' stands for that specific city. Now we can conclude that (6) contains a name, 'Trieste', standing for that city. Further understanding of (6) splits into two cases:

- One, we come to determine that the thought expressed by (6) is that that specific city is not an imperial city. Furthermore, we know that 'ξ is Vienna' is true of just those things that are imperial cities. So we know that (6) is composed of a name standing for the city Trieste and a predicate standing for the concept of being an imperial city.
- Two, our progress in the second stage of understanding is the same as case 1 up to arriving at the knowledge that (6) expresses the thought that the city Trieste fails to have whatever property 'is Vienna' stands for; but, we do not know what that property is. We do not know of just what objects 'ξ is Vienna' is true. Our understanding of (6) then is stalled at this point. We know that it expresses a thought about Trieste, that it falls under some concept, but we have no means of determining whether that thought is true or false.

Before going on I'd like to note two things. First, in later developments of the resolute approach this contextual account of understanding is brought into relation with the Tractarian distinction between sign and symbol. James Conant, for example, articulates the distinction thus:

> sign — an orthographic unit, that which the perceptible expressions for propositions have in common (a sign design, inscription, icon, grapheme, etc.)
>
> symbol — a logical unit, that which meaningful propositions have in common (that is, an item *belonging to a given logical category*: proper name, first-level function, etc.) (2002, p. 400; hereafter *MT*; emphases mine)

In these terms, the preceding account would go like this. Understanding a sentence is discerning how a sentential sign symbolizes, discerning the symbol in that sign. This proceeds by first attempting to discern a division of the sentential sign into parts that symbolize in various ways. This is now often described as providing a "logical segmentation" of the sentential sign. Then, one attempts to discern the specific symbols in the sentential sign, by applying one's knowledge of what symbols these

9781137400697_05_cha03.indd 96 2/11/2015 6:49:03 PM

PROOF

logical parts might be, to discern the specific symbol that the sentential sign is.

Second, on this account of understanding it doesn't seem quite right to say that the parts of sentences *get* their meanings from the meanings of sentences in which they occur. For, knowledge of the meanings or references of words plays a significant role in the second stage of understanding. This feature of Diamond's account persists in later developments of Austerity. Conant, for example, claims that although to understand a new sentence we "must ask ourselves on what occasion we would utter this sentence and what, in that context of use, we would then mean by it," in answering this question "we still rely upon our familiarity with the way words (signs) ordinarily occur (symbolize) in propositions to fashion a segmentation of the propositional sign in question" (*MT*, pp. 403–4). Indeed, he claims that this reliance is not optional: "In the absence of any familiarity with the way words (signs) ordinarily occur (symbolize) in propositions, we would have no basis upon which to fashion possible segmentations of propositional signs, and hence no way to recognize … the symbol in the sign" (*MT*, p. 445, note 84). Neither Diamond nor Conant seems to suggest that this knowledge of meanings of words is reducible to or explainable in terms of knowledge of meaning of sentences. The only thing on which the account insists is that application of this knowledge depends on knowledge of thoughts expressed by sentences. So perhaps the reading of *CP* that emerges from this contextual account of understanding is that the meanings of words in their occurrences in sentences is constrained by the meanings of those sentences. It remains the case that meaning is not context-independent because a sentence may constrain a word occurring therein to shift its meaning from its usual or established meanings.

Julius Caesar and argument-places

As we saw in the second section ('Frege and logical category shifts') above, the major problem for Diamond's ascription of Austerity to Frege is the asymmetry of his treatment of (1), as nonsense, and of (5) and (6), as category shifts. In this section we discuss Diamond's solution to this problem. Let me note to begin with, however, that the notion of weak nonsense seems to provide something of a solution. For, perhaps, Frege takes (1) also to involve a category shift on the part of 'Julius Caesar', from such occurrences as (8), where it is a proper name standing for that familiar conqueror of Gaul, to (1), whose meaningfulness requires 'Julius Caesar' to stand for a first-level concept. But, whereas Frege thought that

9781137400697_05_cha03.indd 97 2/11/2015 6:49:03 PM

PROOF

there is an established first-level concept meaning of 'is a Vienna', he doesn't think there is such a meaning for 'is a Julius Caesar'.

Diamond's solution is different. It depends on two notions: that of the argument-places of a concept or relation expression, and that of syntactic markers for logical category or role. Naturally she begins by outlining a certain picture of argument-places that she rejects. Consider:

14. Anastasia lives in Charlottesville.
15. Another Anastasia lives in Charlottesville.

It might seem that (14) is the result of filling the argument-place of the concept expression

16. ξ lives in Charlottesville

with the argument 'Anastasia', and (15) is also the result of filling this same argument-place of (16) with a different argument, 'another Anastasia'. Diamond, however, holds that (16), with its argument-place, is not discernible in (15). The concept expression (16) demands that its argument-place be filled with expressions with certain syntactic markers. 'Anastasia', a singular noun with no article or numeral, has the syntactic markers to be an occupant of the argument-place of (16). 'Another Anastasia', in contrast, doesn't have the markers to be an occupant of the argument-place of (16). (15), rather, is the result of filling the argument-place of

17. Another ξ lives in Charlottesville

with 'Anastasia'. What these syntactic markers mark becomes a bit clearer from the following passage:

> [T]he argument place is not as it were a *place* at all. It is a place *for* a proper name or a bound individual variable, and if it has not got in it what has the *syntactical marks of use-as-a-proper-name or use-as-a-bound-individual-variable*, the 'place' simply is not there to be seen. That is, we cannot look to see what sort of expression is in the place where an expression for an argument ought to go: we can look at a combination of words to see whether it can be construed as such-and-such a concept expression *with* its argument place. (*FN*, p. 82; first emphases mine)[7]

The idea then seems to be this. As we saw from Diamond's account of *CP*, the sense of a sentence as a whole determines how it is composed of sub-sentential expressions. Thus, it is only because (14) can express the

9781137400697_05_cha03.indd 98 2/11/2015 6:49:03 PM

PROOF

thought that what 'Anastasia' stands for falls under the concept that (16) stands for that (14) is the name 'Anastasia' filling the argument-place of (16). The syntactic markers of 'Anastasia' in (14) is what makes it possible, or how "the language" makes it possible, for (14) to express that thought, for they mark 'Anastasia' as used as a proper name in (14). The very same syntactic features – singular noun, no article, no numeral – mark 'Anastasia' as a first-level concept expression in (15), filling the argument-place of the second-level concept expression (17) occurring in (15).

One thing that seems clear is that 'Anastasia' undergoes a category shift from (14) to (15). This shift is only possible because the syntactic markers for being an occupant of a proper name argument-place in (14) are also the markers for being an occupant of a first-level predicate argument-place in (15). That is to say, there is a possibility in the language of undergoing this category shift. But such a possibility doesn't always exist. Consider

18. The King of France lives in Charlottesville.

Since (18) can express the thought that whatever 'the King of France' stands for falls under the concept expressed by (16), 'the King of France' in (18) evidently has the syntactic markers for being an occupant of a proper name argument-place in (18). But arguably

19. Another the King of France lives in Charlottesville.

expresses no thought at all. In other words, the language does not provide the possibility for 'the King of France' to make the category shift to being the occupant of a first-level concept expression argument-place in (19).

Diamond, I take it, holds that Frege's treatment of

1. There is Julius Caesar

as nonsense stems, in effect, from seeing it as a failed category shift from, for example,

8. Julius Caesar crossed the Rubicon in 49 BC

Diamond's interpretive hypothesis is that

> Frege mistakenly thought that the only sort of argument place ever marked by the occurrence of a noun in the singular without an article or numeral or other explicit indicator is that of a first-level concept

9781137400697_05_cha03.indd 99 2/11/2015 6:49:03 PM

PROOF

> or relational expression. The second-level concept expression we can recognize in 'There is a horse' cannot therefore be recognized if we replace 'a horse' by a noun with what we might call the null indicator, like 'Julius Caesar.' (*FN*, p. 84)

The reason why this is a mistake is that certain mass terms – her example is 'brandy' can occur with the "'null indicator"' to mark both first-level and second-level function argument places.

On Diamond's hypothesis, Frege in effect sees (1) as involving the failure of a presupposition of the view of category shifts discussed in the second section ('Frege and logical category shifts') above: the shift of 'Vienna' from (7) to (5) and (6) depends on "an established possibility *in the language* of using what are normally proper names as concept words." Frege holds that it is not always possible for what normally counts for him as a proper name to be used as a predicate in any given sentential context. In particular this possibility does not exist for 'Julius Caesar' in (1). She also thinks that Frege is wrong about the specific case of 'Julius Caesar' in (1). But, whether Frege is right or not, the important question is: what happens when this presupposition fails? Supposing Frege is right, and 'Julius Caesar' cannot make the shift into being a first-level predicate required for (1) to express a thought. Does it follow that it remains a proper name in (1)? If it does, does it not follow that (1)'s failure to express a thought derives from the logical category of these words clashing with the logical category of the remaining words?

Diamond naturally rejects this line of thinking. In the case of 'the King of France' in (19), where "we have not got the syntactical markers of the argument place" of the second-level concept expression (17), "we have not got the argument place *or* the concept expression" (*FN*, p. 82). Specifically,

> [t]he concept expression [(17)] has, written into it, the means of recognition of the argument place – not through what kind of thing the expression there must stand for, but, with complete generality, what sort of expression it must look like. Whatever expression is there of that pattern, the reference of the whole will depend on the first-level concept it stands for – and that is what it is for it to be a term for such an item. On this view, then, [(19)] does not contain any expression *in a gap in* another: it is simply a mess. (*FN*, p. 83; emphasis in original)

Thus, where a word or phrase cannot make a required category shift in a sentence, neither that phrase nor the remaining words of the sentence

9781137400697_05_cha03.indd 100 2/11/2015 6:49:03 PM

PROOF

are properly speaking expressions at all, and so do not belong to logical types at all. *A fortiori*, there is no clash in the logical types of expressions in the sentence. These sentences are logically distinct from those I've been calling weak nonsense. None of their parts belong to any logical category, nor, naturally do they have any reference. On the official view of Austerity, strictly speaking only these sentences, or better, these sentence-like sequences of letters and blanks, are nonsense.

The account of syntactic markers and argument places leads to Diamond's view of another aspect of Frege's attitude toward ordinary language, in contrast to Begriffsschrift:

> In a *Begriffsschrift* there will be completely unequivocal ways of making an argument place recognizable – but not so in ordinary language. That is, although it is possible (on the view I am ascribing to Frege) to make clear how the argument place of any concept or relational expression is indicated, even in ordinary language, there is no guarantee that argument places of fundamentally different kinds will always be marked in distinct ways. Frege himself points out, for example, that the (German) singular definite article does not always indicate that the noun which follows it stands for an object, and he suggests that what the plural definite article indicates is even less capable of simple formulation in a rule.
>
> Natural language is *untidy* in its argument place indicators. (*FN*, p. 84)

Diamond again contrasts this reading of Frege with Dummett's reading. Here the contrast is with Dummett's claim that "'[n]atural language constantly violates [Frege's] principle that an expression which is by its sense incomplete cannot occur without its argument-place" (*FPL*, p. 51). On Diamonds reading, the Fregean principle is not violated by natural language, because there is no "identification of a function expression in natural language except *with* its argument place or places; … whatever the general form of the syntactical indicators of its argument places may be, that general form is part of the expression for the function" (*FN*, p. 84). Moreover, in a footnote she says that Dummett's overall position is "not easy to understand," referring to two places in *FPL*:

> [I]f an attempt at rendering some incomplete expression of given type had the wrong number or types of argument-place, it simply could not be recognized as a rendering of that incomplete expression. (50)

9781137400697_05_cha03.indd 101 2/11/2015 6:49:03 PM

PROOF

> [I]n Frege's eyes, if an [incomplete] expression were to occur without the correct number and types of argument-place, it could not be recognized as the same expression again. (178)

I take Diamond's criticism to be this. In these passages Dummett seems to hold that "an expression can be identified as one with a certain sort of incompleteness only with its argument places" (*FN*, p. 92, note 14). Yet when he takes

> ordinary adjectives in attributive position as [incomplete] expressions … occurring without their argument places – which makes it seem as if the *word* 'blue' (say) has a sense of a certain sort which then requires it (and this requirement is then not adhered to in ordinary language) to come accompanied by an argument place of a certain sort. (ibid.)

But, "no word or words needs completion," so how can the word 'blue' be identified as a particular sort of incomplete expression? Based on the two passages from *FPL* it seems that according to Dummett one can identify 'blue' as a particular incomplete expression only if it occurs with the correct number and types of argument place. That is, such expressions of natural language as attributive adjectives don't violate Frege's principle after all.

Dummett on the Context Principle

Since the reading of Frege's *CP* is central to Diamond's Austerity, I want to begin our examination of her differences with Dummett by looking at his account of this principle. We saw Dummett dismissing what he takes to be Quine's view of the principle, the "slogan" that "the unit of significance is not the word but the sentence," as either absurd or truistic. But if we continue reading past this dismissal, we find Dummett saying

> It must be conceded that no philosopher before Frege had succeeded in presenting an account of meaning which displayed the reason for the truth of [Quine's] slogan, … in that sense of that slogan in which it is a truism. …. That, however, is no defence for ascribing to Frege a crude slogan in place of the careful formulation of the matter which he in fact provided.
>
> Frege's account, if it is to be reduced to a slogan, could be expressed in this way: that in the order of *explanation* the sense of a sentence is primary, but in the order of *recognition* the sense of a word is primary. (*FPL*, p. 3–4)

9781137400697_05_cha03.indd 102 2/11/2015 6:49:04 PM

PROOF

Dummett, it turns out, objects to the Quinean slogan primarily because it fails to reflect how, on Frege's view, the primacy of sentence sense is consistent with the productivity of understanding. The primacy of word sense in the order of recognition is the compositional explanation of this productivity:

> We … derive our knowledge of the sense of any given sentence from our previous knowledge of the senses of the words that compose it, together with our observation of the way in which they are combined in that sentence. It is this which I intended to express by saying that, for Frege, the sense of the word is primary, and that of the sentence secondary, in the order of recognition: any theory of meaning which is unable to incorporate this point will be impotent to account for the obvious and essential fact that we can understand new sentences. (*FPL*, p. 4)

The primacy of sentence sense in the order of explanation, in contrast, is this:

> Since it is only by means of a sentence that we may perform a linguistic act – that we can say anything – the possession of a sense by a word or complex expression short of a sentence cannot consist in anything else but its being governed by a general rule which partially specifies the sense of sentences containing it. If this is so, then, on pain of circularity, the general notion of the sense possessed by a sentence must be capable of being explained without reference to the notion of the senses of constituent words or expressions. This is possible via the conception of truth-conditions: to grasp the sense of a sentence is, in general, to know the conditions under which that sentence is true and the conditions under which it is false.
>
> Of course, this highly generalized notion of the contribution made by a word to determining the sense of a sentence in which it occurs is merely programmatic: to give it any substance, we have first to categorize words and expressions according to the different *kinds of contribution* they can make to the sense of sentences containing them, and then give, for each such category, a general account of the *form taken by the semantic rule* which governs them. (*FPL*, p. 4–5; emphases mine)

What is explanatorily fundamental is the notion of truth conditions of a sentence, that is, its sense. The sense of any sub-sentential expression is the contribution it makes to determining the truth conditions of sentences in which it occurs. This idea of contribution to truth conditions

9781137400697_05_cha03.indd 103 2/11/2015 6:49:04 PM

PROOF

is made more precise through a categorization of different "kinds of contribution," and "the form of the semantic rule" governing expressions belonging to each kind. I take it that this categorization of kinds of contribution is logical categorization, that is, types of logical role, thus: proper name, first-level concept expression, first-level relation expression, and so on. The "form" of semantic rule is how an expression of a given logical type affects the truth conditions of sentences containing it. The form of semantic rule for proper names, for instance, is that the truth conditions of thoughts expressed by sentences containing such an expression is determined, in part, by an object to which the name is related. This relation is "standing for the object," but this relation is not independent of the senses of sentences: "w]e know what it is for a name to stand for an object only by knowing how to determine the truth-values of sentences containing the name, a piece of knowledge which can be expressed in terms of that relation between name and object" (*FPL*, p. 6).

This account of sub-sentential sense is consistent with the productivity of understanding because although

> we cannot grasp the sense of a word otherwise than by reference to the way in which it *can* be used to form sentences[,] we understand the word independently of *any particular* sentence containing it. Our understanding of any such particular sentence is derived from our understanding of its constituent words, which understanding determines for us the truth-conditions of that sentence; but our understanding of those words consists in our grasp of the *way* in which they *may* figure in sentences in general, and how, in general, they combine to determine the truth-conditions of those sentences. (*FPL*, p. 5; emphases mine)

The last sentence quoted is critical. It tell us that understanding a word is grasping a "way" in which the word "may figure in sentences in general." To understand the significance of this, note first that this "way" is its logical role in sentences. To understand 'Vienna', for instance, is to know that sentences containing it may be determined as true or false by, *inter alia*, how things are with a certain city in central Europe; that is, to know that this word can play the logical role of a proper name in sentences. Next, note that Dummett speaks here of the logical role the word "may" or "can" have, *not* the logical role it *must* have. That is to say, it doesn't follow from Dummett's view that, given a grasp of 'Vienna' as a proper name standing for a specific city, we *must* understand 'Vienna' in

6. Trieste is no Vienna

9781137400697_05_cha03.indd 104 2/11/2015 6:49:04 PM

PROOF

to be playing the logical role of a proper name. Rather, it is open, on this view, that we may come to see that 'Vienna' in this sentence is *not* playing the role of a proper name, perhaps by realizing that a sentence with this syntactic structure is not determined as true or false by some unique object to which 'Vienna' is related. The conclusion we would have to reach is that the grasp of 'Vienna' we already have doesn't suffice for understanding this sentence, that is, we don't understand the word 'Vienna' as it occurs in this sentence. To the extent that we can make sense of this sentence, we will have to take 'Vienna' in this sentence to be a different word, different "in a logical rather than a typographical sense," from the word 'Vienna' we already grasp. The point, in general, is that on this context-independent view of sense, the sense of a word gives us a permission rather than a commandment for discerning a specific logical role in the sentences in which that word occurs. Thus, in fact, Dummett's view allows for shifts of logical role, so it's not clear that it is committed to the first thesis of Substantiality.

Indeed, all this might have already seemed obvious. Diamond describes the difference between the logical role of 'Vienna' in (7) and the logical role of 'Vienna' in (5) and (6) as a shift in role. Of course there is no disputing that the sequence of letters 'V'⌢'i'⌢'e'⌢'n'⌢'n'⌢'a' has different roles in these sentences. But Diamond evidently wants to say something stronger: the *word* 'Vienna' has different types of senses in these sentences, for, otherwise, it's unclear how Frege's treatment of sentences (5)–(7) goes against the (sentential) context-independence of sense. But this conception of the difference in role of two occurrences of this sequence of letters is not mandatory. We can equally coherently take this difference to be the occurrence of distinct but homonymous words in (7) and in (5) and (6). But then it is not that a single word has different senses when it occurs in different sentential contexts; it is, rather, that different words, with different context-independent types of senses, but both spelt 'V'⌢'i'⌢'e'⌢'n'⌢'n'⌢'a', occur in these sentences.[8]

I would like to note in passing that an apt description of Dummett's context-independent view of sense may be adapted from *Tractatus* 2.0122:

> The thing is independent, in so far as it can occur in all possible circumstances, but this form of independence is a form of connexion with the atomic fact, a form of dependence. (It is impossible for words to occur in two different ways, alone and in the proposition.)[9]

9781137400697_05_cha03.indd 105 2/11/2015 6:49:04 PM

PROOF

The sense of a word is independent, because it can play a role in truth-value determination in more than one sentence, one sentential "circumstance." But this is a form of dependence, because there is no more to this sense than the truth-value determination role it can play in sentences.

Now it may be that Diamond would still find the present account of Dummett's views problematic, for she appears to have an argument against this context independent conception of sense. She takes Dummett to hold that whenever the sense of an occurrence of a word in a sentence is not fixed by general rules we have a case of ambiguity, where the "sense of an ambiguous word is not determined by the context; rather, the context provides grounds for guessing which sense is intended" (*FPL*, p. 268). Against this Diamond objects,

> In a case like [sentence (6),] 'Trieste is no Vienna' there is no question of *guessing* from the context or anything else what the role of 'Vienna' is. Further, we can recognize such cross-category equivocation even when the term in question has not antecedently been given two senses. That is, even if 'Vienna' has only been given the sense of a proper name, the last word in 'Trieste is no Vienna' is not a word whose sense is that of a proper name, occurring with the wrong sort of role or in the wrong sort of place. That word, there, is a concept word, and has, on our hypothesis, no specified sense as such. (*FN*, p. 88)

This objection misconceives the notion of ambiguity Dummett has in mind. He is not thinking of classic cases of ambiguity, such as the word 'bank' in

Dummett left the bank at 1pm

In such cases one does indeed have to guess or infer from the context what is the sense, the logical role of 'bank', because, to put it in Diamond's terms, none of the syntactic markers present in this sentence determines which logical role 'bank' is here playing. It is clear that (6) is not such a case; moreover, nothing in the context-independent conception of sense implies that (6) has to be understood as such a case. We see from the passage just quoted that Diamond describes two cases involving 'Vienna' and (6). First, 'Vienna' has, "antecedently," two senses. That is, before encountering (6) the speaker already knows that a sentence *S* containing 'Vienna' *may* (also) be determined as true or false by, *inter alia*, whether the bearer of a proper name *n*, occurring in *S* in the argument place of a predicate 'ξ is a Vienna' discernible in *S*, is an imperial city. If that is so, then on the Dummettian view there is no

9781137400697_05_cha03.indd 106 2/11/2015 6:49:04 PM

PROOF

indeterminacy about the sense of 'Vienna' in (6); it occurs in (6) with the context-independent sense just described. If there is no indeterminacy, there is also no "guessing." Naturally a speaker who comes across (6) for the first time, even armed with knowledge of both senses of 'Vienna', may not immediately discern that 'Vienna' occurs in (6) with the predicate sense, and so might initially "guess" that this is the case. But that is obviously not relevant. The second case Diamond describes is one in which 'Vienna' has antecedently only a proper name sense. Here again there is no indeterminacy in whether 'Vienna' in (6) has this sense. As we have seen, on the context-independent conception 'Vienna' is not *required* to have this sense wherever it occurs, and the syntax of (6) determines that 'Vienna' doesn't occur there as a proper name. A speaker who encounters (6) knowing the one sense that 'Vienna' has would have to conclude that 'Vienna' in (6) has no specific established sense in the language, exactly as Diamond says. One might describe this as her having to conclude that 'Vienna' in (6) is not the word 'Vienna' she understands. But she may well try to work out, to "guess,"' from the context in which she encounters (6), what specific predicate 'Vienna' in (6) might have been intended to be. But again, obviously, the possibility of this "guessing" cannot be objectionable in the context-dependent conception, since it is a possibility to which Austerity is committed.

I conclude Dummett's reading of Frege's *CP* as consistent with a context-independent conception of sense is neither in tension with the phenomenon of shift in logical category nor committed to the first characteristic thesis of Substantiality.

Logical valency and incompleteness

In this section we'll look at Dummett's discussion of sentence

2. Chairman Mao is rare

Recall to begin with how Diamond understands Dummett's views. Two claims she takes him to hold are:

1. This sentence is nonsense because it is composed of 'rare', a second-level predicate and 'Chairman Mao', a proper name, and their senses clash.
2. In natural languages such nonsensical sentences are allowed by grammar because natural language expressions incomplete in sense do not always occur with their argument places.

9781137400697_05_cha03.indd 107 2/11/2015 6:49:04 PM

PROOF

Her view is that even in natural languages incomplete expressions occur with indications of their argument places, and if (2) is nonsense then either 'Chairman Mao' in (2) is a first-level predicate or neither 'rare' nor 'Chairman Mao' in (2) has sense at all. Moreover, she notes that Dummett holds another claim:

3. An incomplete expression's argument places are essential to our re-identifying it as occurring in various sentences.

This, however, contradicts claim 2, the view that incomplete expressions of ordinary language don't occur with their argument places.

We will see that Dummett's position is more complex than what these three claims suggest. Let's start with the texts from which claims 1–3 are arguably derived. This is a continuous passage from *FPL*, which I break into three parts, [α]–[γ]; 3 comes from [α], 2 from [β] and 1 from [γ]:

> [α] It is a fundamental principle of Frege's theory … that a symbol for an incomplete expression can never occur without *its argument-place, or argument-places*, with the sole exception of a bound variable in that of its occurrences in which it occurs next to the quantifier or other operator that binds it. This principle is at once evident from Frege's whole way of regarding the language which he constructed for the purpose of logical analysis: for if an attempt at rendering some incomplete expression of given type had the *wrong number or types of argument-place*, it simply could not be recognized as a rendering of that incomplete expression. The result of adherence to this principle is that, in Frege's symbolic language, it is *not merely forbidden, but actually impossible*, to violate the distinctions of type. If, for example, we attempt to insert a first-level predicate '$F(\xi)$' in the argument-place of another first-level predicate '$G(\xi)$', we do not get a sentence at all, for '$F(\xi)$' still contains a gap, represented by the 'ξ', which remains to be filled. If, on the other hand, we attempt to insert a proper name 'a' in the argument-place of a second-level predicate '$\mathrm{M}x\ \Phi(x)$', we are equally unable to do this, because 'a' contains no gap into which we can insert the bound variable 'x'. Thus, so far as Frege's own symbolic language is concerned, his doctrine of levels *does not so much prescribe the meaninglessness of certain expressions, as draw attention to their non-existence*. It earns the right, however, to be called a theory of significance by the light which it throws, indirectly, upon natural language.
>
> [β] Natural language constantly violates the principle that an expression which is by its sense incomplete cannot occur without its argument-place. Most adjectives, for example, are either first-level

9781137400697_05_cha03.indd 108 2/11/2015 6:49:05 PM

PROOF

> predicates or first-level relational expressions with their argument-places suppressed. *When it is needed, the argument-place can be restored by prefacing the adjective with the copula*; and it is evident that we cannot come to understand what such an adjective means save by learning the sense of the predicate formed by attaching it to the copula – for instance, we can learn what 'slimy' means only by learning what it is for something to be slimy. Lacking the device of bound variables, however, natural language provides numerous contexts in which the adjective occurs without the copula, and thus without its argument-place: if such contexts are represented in Frege's symbolic language, the corresponding predicate will contain a bound variable (or complex pseudo-term) in its argument-place. Frege would say that we can only gain an explicit understanding of the tacit workings of natural language – *the way in which the sense of this context is related to the use of the adjective in its primary position, after the copula* – by observing how such uses of the adjective do duty for what is achieved in the symbolic language by means of bound variables.
>
> [γ] But, precisely because natural language violates the principle that each expression incomplete in sense must carry with it its argument-place(s), it does become possible within natural language to form meaningless but grammatically correct sentences which *violate the distinctions of type* and *in the symbolic language could not be constructed at all*. For instance, the sentence 'Chairman Mao is rare', while perfectly grammatical, is meaningless because 'rare', though in appearance just like a first-level predicative adjective, has the sense of a second-level predicate. *The diagnosis and explanation of such failures of significance in natural language can be easily accomplished by reference to the impossibility of constructing a corresponding sentence in the symbolic language*. (*FPL*, pp. 50–1; emphases mine)

I will begin with [β], with what Dummett means by claiming that natural language "constantly violates" what I will call the Argument-Places Principle:

> An incomplete expression must always occur with a specific number and types of argument-places.

Consider a sentence containing Dummett's example, the adjective 'slimy':

> 20. The interior robber frog is a slimy amphibian

PROOF

Let's ask, what argument-places are discernible in this sentence, and what are their syntactic markers? If we follow Diamond's account of

Anastasia lives in Charlottesville

we might take sentence (20) to be the result of filling the argument-place of

21. ξ is a slimy amphibian

with 'the interior robber frog', whose use here is as a first-level concept expression, marked by the definite article. Another marker of an expression for this argument-place might be the indefinite article, for

A Kihansi spray toad is a slimy amphibian

is a meaningful sentence. Perhaps a plural noun phrase ending is also a marker, if we may suppose that in

Austin blind salamanders are slimy amphibians

we can discern the first-level concept expression (21). In none of these analyses do we discern in (20) the first-level predicate

22. ξ is slimy

with its argument-place marked for a proper name. This, I take it, is part of what Dummett has in mind in taking adjectives to be first-level predicates with their argument-places "suppressed. We are only forced to see *this* predicate, (22), in sentence (20) when we observe that (20) together with

23. Chairman Mao is an interior robber frog

imply

24. Chairman Mao is slimy

and

25. Chairman Mao is amphibian

This logical connection reveals that the truth or falsity of (20) is connected to the truth and falsity of (23) and (24); for instance if (23) is true and

9781137400697_05_cha03.indd 110 2/11/2015 6:49:05 PM

PROOF

(24) false, then (20) is false. Since the truth or falsity of (24) depends on what the predicate (22) is true of, this predicate plays a role in fixing the truth conditions of (20). This is made clear in a Begriffsschrift paraphrase of (20):

$(\forall x)(x \text{ is an interior robber frog} \supset (x \text{ is slimy} \,\&\, x \text{ is amphibian}))$

where (22), with its argument-place occupied by a bound variable, is a part of the sentence, because of the contribution it makes to the thought it and (20) express. So the "need" to represent the validity of an inference involving (20) compels the argument-place of 'slimy' to be "restored by prefacing it with the copula" in making explicit the thought it expresses.

Let's now move to [γ]. Observe, to begin with, that (2), the sentence Dummett pronounces nonsensical, contains 'rare' prefaced with the copula. So presumably its argument-place has been restored in (2). But then it's hard to see how the nonsensicality of (2) results from violation of the Argument-Places Principle. I think we can reconstruct what Dummett might have been getting at by focusing on how he characterizes 'rare': it is "in appearance just like a first-level predicative adjective."' It looks just like 'slimy'. So

26. The interior robber frog is a rare amphibian

looks just like (20). Indeed, going by Diamond's type of analysis, it appears to result from filling the argument-place of

ξ is a rare amphibian

with 'the interior robber frog', whose use here is also as a first-level concept expression, marked by the definite article. This argument-place seem also to be marked by the indefinite article, as in

A Kihansi spray toad is a rare amphibian,

and perhaps also by a plural noun phrase ending, as in

Austin blind salamanders are rare amphibians.

Now, since 'slimy' occurs in (20) with a "suppressed" argument-place, one might think that 'rare', which looks just the same, also occurs in (26) with a suppressed argument place. This is right, but it would be

9781137400697_05_cha03.indd 111 2/11/2015 6:49:05 PM

PROOF

a mistake to think that the argument-place suppressed is of the same logical type as the argument-place of 'slimy' in (20). If it were, then the presence of that argument-place in (26) would be revealed, by, for instance, the validity of inferences from (26) and

23. Chairman Mao is an interior robber frog

to

2. Chairman Mao is rare

and

25. Chairman Mao is amphibian

It is at least highly unclear that (2) follows from (26) and (23), although (25) does. The presence of the predicate 'ξ is rare' in (26) shows itself, rather, by (26)'s implying

27. The interior robber frog is rare

For if it turns out that there are millions of interior robber frogs in the world, rather than just around six hundred, (26) surely wouldn't be true. The role that 'ξ is rare' plays in (26) is made explicit in such a Begriffsschrift paraphrase as

$(\forall x)(x$ is an interior robber frog $\supset x$ is amphibian) & $(\text{rare}_x)(x$ is an interior robber frog)

Thus the logical role of 'rare' in (26) is quite different from that of 'slimy' in (20). Dummett's point is that not only is the argument-place of 'rare' suppressed in (26), but even with argument-place restored with the copula, as in 'ξ is rare', the *type* of argument-place is not evident; indeed, if we were to try to "render" the argument-place, with the restored copula, of this predicate in Begriffsschrift we would get something like '$\Xi(x)$ is rare_x'.

So Dummett's concern with 'rare' in (2) is not really with the *absence* of an argument-place but rather with the *lack of indication of the logical type* of argument place. Natural language's violations of the Argument-Place Principle consists in there being, in general, no unequivocal indications of the existence or types of argument-places of words functioning

9781137400697_05_cha03.indd 112 2/11/2015 6:49:05 PM

PROOF

as incomplete expressions in sentences. In light of this, we can understand two claims Dummett makes in [α]. First, in natural language an incomplete expression can occur "without *its* argument-place(s)." The "its" here means "constitutive of sense"; that is, it is constitutive of the sense of a particular incomplete expression that only a specific number of expressions of specific types can fill its argument-places to produce a sentence expressing a thought. Second, the significance of the claim that "if an attempt at rendering some incomplete expression of given type had the wrong number or types of argument-place, it simply could not be recognized as a rendering of that incomplete expression" is this. (27) can perhaps be "rendered" in Begriffsschrift as

(rare$_x$)(x is an interior robber frog)

But it is easy to imagine a context of utterance in which

28. The steak on Lloyd's plate is rare

would be understood in such a way that it is rendered as

($\exists!x$)(x is a steak on Lloyd's plate & x is rare)

Here 'rare' is rendered as a first-level predicate, with a different type of argument-place from the predicate that renders 'rare' in (27). It follows that 'rare' in (28) cannot be recognized as the same incomplete expression as 'rare' in (27); that is, these are homonymous words.

What I have argued so far is that Dummett's conception of the logical shortcomings of natural language, as expressed in [α] and [β], does not differ substantially from Diamond' view that "argument-place indicators" of natural language are "untidy" in that "argument places of fundamentally different kinds" may not "be marked in distinct ways." But of course now we come to the critical question: if this is right, why is it that Dummett holds that some natural language sentences, such as (2), "violate distinctions of type" and are thereby meaningless, while Diamond doesn't? The answer, I now turn to argue, is that Dummett means something different by type violations than Diamond, and that, moreover, Diamond, and Austerity in general, are committed to the existence of type violations in Dummett's sense.

Let's start by observing that the only reason Dummett explicitly gives in [γ] for the meaninglessness of (2) is that 'rare' looks like a first-level predicative adjective but has the sense of a second-level predicate. How

9781137400697_05_cha03.indd 113 2/11/2015 6:49:05 PM

PROOF

does this fact about 'rare' lead to (2)'s being nonsense? And what does this have to do with a violation of type distinction? Recall first from the last section that, on Dummett's context-independent conception of sense, if 'rare' and 'Chairman Mao' have "usual" or "established" meanings, then the sense of each is a logical role that it can play in sentences. So, let's suppose that 'Chairman Mao' has just one established meaning; it has the sense of a proper name, and so may play the role of standing for the first Communist leader of China. And let's suppose further that 'rare' also has just one established meaning; it has the sense of a second-level predicate, and can play the role of standing for the second-level concept within which any first-level concepts falls just in case (comparatively) few objects fall under that first-level concept. The question now is, do these words play these logical roles in (2)? The answer is that if (2) is meaningful, if it expresses a thought, then it is *impossible* for these words to play these logical roles in (2), for there is no such thing as a condition for the truth of any thought determined by nothing more than an object and a second-level concept. What follows from this is that

(*) If (2) is to be meaningful, then at least one of 'rare' and 'Chairman Mao' in (2) must have a sense of a different type of from its established sense.

That is to say, at least one of these two sequences of letters and blanks has to be a different word or phrase from the established words or phrases that are spelt in the same way. (*) evidently gives us a way of reaching the conclusion that (2) is meaningless: show that neither 'rare' nor 'Chairman Mao' in (2) has a sense of a different type of from its established sense. Our discussion of Diamond's two sorts of (clash-free) nonsense, the unofficial weak and the official strict, offers a number of alternatives for doing this. For example, suppose that, for some reason, 'rare' in (2) can only have the same type of sense as its established meaning. Then (2) can be meaningful only if 'Chairman Mao' undergoes a category shift to a first-level predicate type of sense. There are then two ways in which (2) would be meaningless.

a. 'Chairman Mao' is "allowed by the language" to make the shift, but it is not clear what it is to be a Chairman Mao, so there is no, or no obvious specific first-level concept that 'Chairman Mao' can stand for in (2). Then (2) would express no specific thought, and so would be weak nonsense.
b. 'Chairman Mao' is "not allowed by the language" to make the shift. So there is no such thing as 'Chairman Mao' playing the logical role

9781137400697_05_cha03.indd 114 2/11/2015 6:49:06 PM

PROOF

> of a first-level predicate in (2). (2) then expresses no thought, and so would be strict nonsense.

Since Dummett says no more than that (2) is meaningless, there is no reason to think that either of these routes to the meaninglessness of (2) is incompatible with his assessment of (2).

Two dubious assumptions are at work in these two paths to the nonsensicality of (2): 'rare' in (2) cannot have a first-level predicate sense, and for the strict meaninglessness assessment, 'Chairman Mao' cannot have a first-level predicate sense in (2). (a) is surely undermined by the fact that 'rare' in (28) has a first-level predicate sense. And (b) is undermined by the fact that it is easy to imagine contexts of utterance of

29. Xi Jinping is no Chairman Mao

or

There's a lot of Chairman Mao in Deng's speeches

in which the occurrences of 'Chairman Mao' play first-level predicate roles. So Dummett's assessment of (2) as meaningless is surely mistaken. But what is important for our purposes is not the correctness of the assessment but its basis, (*). (*) allows us to clarify Dummett's conception of the relation between natural language and Begriffsschrift. We see from [α] and [γ] that Frege's doctrine of levels of incompleteness, underlying the design of Begriffsschrift to obey the Argument-Places Principle, is a theory of significance for natural language because "the impossibility of constructing" a Begriffsschrift paraphrase of a natural language sentence provides a "diagnosis and explanation of failures of significance in natural language." In order to see what this amounts to, observe that (*), after dropping the two dubious assumptions, indicates a certain impossibility:

(**) If (2) is to be meaningful, then it is impossible for both 'rare' in (2) to play the established logical role of a second-level predicate, and 'Chairman Mao' in (2) to play the established logical role of a proper name.

This impossibility is, of course, also the impossibility for the truth condition of any thought to be determined by no more than an object and a second-level concept. Begriffsschrift is designed so that these impossibilities are matched by the impossibility of forming a Begriffsschrift

9781137400697_05_cha03.indd 115 2/11/2015 6:49:06 PM

PROOF

sentence with no more than Begriffsschrift expressions with the same types of sense as the established senses of 'Chairman Mao' and 'rare' mentioned in (**). That there is no paraphrase of (2) into Begriffsschrift if (2) is taken to be composed of words with these established senses indicates that something is logically awry with (2), taken in this way. This doesn't imply that the sequence of letters and spaces that make up (2) can't be understood as a sentence that is in perfect logical order. But *that* sentence would be composed of the words 'Chairman Mao' and 'rare' with senses different from their established senses mentioned in (**). It would not *be* the logically troubled sentence that is (2) taken to be composed of words with these established senses. This logical trouble, I take it, is what Dummett means by a violation of type distinctions, and the impossibility underlying it is reflected, and perhaps also "diagnosed and explained,"' by the impossibility of producing a Begriffsschrift paraphrase of (2), taken in this way.

An unacknowledged commitment of austerity[10]

I now turn to show that Diamond and Conant are committed to essentially the same sorts of impossibilities as those that underlie Dummett's conception of violations of logical type distinctions.

Let's begin with Conant's claim that there "are two equally *natural* ways to segment th[e] string" of signs that is (2) (*MT*, p. 404):

> (a) to construe 'Chairman Mao' as symbolizing a first-level function (on the model of
>
> 29. Xi Jinping is no Chairman Mvvao)
>
> [then (2) might mean something like 'The kind of exemplary statesmanship Chairman Mao exhibited is rare'],
>
> (b) to construe 'rare' as symbolizing a first-level function [as in the established English usage
>
> 28. The steak on Lloyd's plate is rare]
>
> These are 'natural' ways of 'reading' the string because each reading segments the string along lines dictated by an established usage (i.e. an established method of symbolizing by means) of signs. The expression ' – is rare' has an established use in the language (in sentences such as
>
> 27. The interior robber frog is rare)

9781137400697_05_cha03.indd 116 2/11/2015 6:49:06 PM

PROOF

> as a second level function; the expression 'Chairman Mao' has an established use in the language (in sentences such as
>
> 30. Chairman Mao ate only boiled rice)
>
> as a proper name. (*MT*, p. 404; square brackets in the text; sample sentence inserted from this essay)

Clearly Conant's "established use in the language" is just the notion of established meaning that I have attributed to Dummett, and these two methods of making sense of (2) each turn on a category shift from an established meaning. Method (a) consists of a shift from the established proper name type of sense of 'Chairman Mao' to a first-level predicate type of sense; method (b) consists of a shift from one established, second-level predicate, sense of 'rare' to another established, first-level predicate, sense of 'rare'. At this point Conant writes,

> Each of these established uses dictates a possible segmentation of the string – each of which excludes the other. There is not anything that is simultaneously segmenting the string along both lines at once. Segmenting it either way, we supply a possible context of significant use and thus confer upon the string (2) a sense. (ibid.)

Method (b), as we saw, consists of taking the sequence of words 'Chairman Mao' in (2) to be an occurrence of a first-level predicate, 'ξ is (a) Chairman Mao', of the same logical type its occurrence in (30). But method (a) way *requires*, one might say *necessitates*, *precisely not* taking 'Chairman Mao' in (2) to be of the same logical type as 'Chairman Mao' in (30). That these methods "exclude one another," so that "there is no such thing as simultaneously" logically segmenting (2) in both of these ways means that it is *impossible* for (2) to make sense if both of its parts, 'Chairman Mao' and 'is rare' are both first-level predicates, that is, of the same logical type as their occurrences in, respectively, (29) and (28). This impossibility is clearly just that which underlies Dummett's view of (2).

Consider now Diamond's discussion in *NMB* of

> 3. Caesar is a prime number

On Diamond's analysis, the sign 'ξ is a prime number', *as it occurs in*

> 31. 53 is a prime number,

9781137400697_05_cha03.indd 117 2/11/2015 6:49:06 PM

PROOF

and given how (31) is standardly understood, has the logical role of a numerical predicate. It is, in the terminology she employs in *NMB*, a numerical predicate "Logical Element." In order for this sign, *as it occurs in* (3), to have the same logical role as its occurrence in (31), 'Caesar'-in-(3) *cannot* be of the same logical type as the occurrence of 'Caesar' in

8. Caesar crossed the Rubicon in 49 BC

as (8) is usually understood. The established usage of 'Caesar'-in-(8) is as a proper name of a person, so unless 'Caesar'-in-(3) is given a new (that is, not usual or established) definition so as to make it a term for a number, for example, to make it of the same type as '53'-in-(31), it fails to be an expression altogether in (3). That is to say, in any meaningful sentence in which we can discern a numerical-predicate symbol (logically) combined with another symbol, that other symbol *can* be a term-for-a-number and *cannot* be a proper-name-of-a-person. (Clearly the other symbol also could be, for example, a quantifier.) Diamond puts the point thus:

> If we make no … new assignments of meaning [to signs occurring in (3), (3) would remain a sentence] which has some superficial resemblance to sentences of *two distinct logical patterns*; it has a word but no Logical Element in common with some sentences about Caesar, sentences of the pattern:
>
> 32. proper name of a person combined with personal predicate,
>
> [such as (8)] and it has words but no Logical Element in common with sentences [of the pattern:
>
> 33. term for a number combined with numerical predicate
>
> such as (31) (*NMB*, p., 102; emphases mine; (32) and (33) my interpolations)

We are now in a position to see that Austerity is committed to a conception of logical valency. Logical valency in this sense is not a property of meanings, and so of expressions bearing those meanings, that can be possessed independently of the use of sentential signs to express propositions. Logical valency depends, rather, on what logical segmentations of significant sentences are possible. So, for example, proper names have the right logical valency to combine with first level predicates because,

9781137400697_05_cha03.indd 118 2/11/2015 6:49:06 PM

PROOF

if one discerns or hypothesizes that a part of a sentential sign functions logically as a proper name, then the rest of that sentential sign, which, following Diamond, I'll call the "leftover part" (1991c, p. 134), would *have to* function as a first-level predicate if the entire sentential sign is to make sense. Similarly, proper names don't have the right logical valency to combine with second level predicates because, if one discerns or hypothesizes that a part of a sentential sign functions logically as a proper name, then the leftover part of that sentential sign *cannot* function as a second-level predicate if one is to make sense of the entire sentential sign.[11]

A concluding remark

The foregoing discussion shows that Dummett's, or at least Dummettian views of *CP*, of sense, and of violations of logical type distinctions are not incompatible with Austerity. It shows, furthermore, that Austerity is in fact implicitly committed to a Dummettian conception of type violations. I would like conclude by suggesting that these commitments point to something like a tension in Diamond's account of Austerity. The source of these commitments is her view of our activity of "making sense" of new sentences as essentially involving projecting our knowledge of possible logical syntactic structures and of possible semantic contents onto those sentences. On this view nonsense is the result of a necessary failure of projections, a failure grounded in the impossibility of these projections cohering logically. This view does not seem to sit well with Diamond's insistence on a very strong construal of *CP*, as the claim that the *only* source of the meanings of parts of a sentence is the meaning of that sentence, so that if a sentence has no meaning, there's nothing from which its parts can get any meaning. For, the picture on this construal is that a sentence's being nonsense or not is something primitive and fundamental, not explainable or constrained by its structure and parts. Dummett's weaker construal of *CP*, by contrast, does not conflict with the view of nonsense as the impossibility of making sense, and thereby avoids the tension discernible in Austerity. So, in the end, the upshot of our discussion is that the best account of Austerity may well involve, not rejecting Dummett's views, but incorporating them.[12]

Notes

1. I occasionally amend the translations of Frege and of Wittgenstein quoted in the text. So that the reader always has the means of assessing these

PROOF

departures, I invariably give original text in notes. In the present case the original is: 'kann nie von einem Gegenstande ausgesagt werden, was … von dem Begriffe ausgesagt wird; denn ein Eigenname kann nie Prädikatsausdruck sein …. Der Satz 'es gibt Julius Cäsar' ist weder wahr noch falsch, sondern sinnlos.' (Frege 1892, p. 200).

2. English citations are to the Ogden-Ramsey translation, (Wittgenstein 1922). In the original Wittgenstein writes of 'Eine Zeichensprahe …die der *logischen* Grammatik – der logischen Syntax – gehorcht'(Wittgenstein 1921, p. 209).
3. The original is: 'die Sprache manchmal dasselbe Wort teils als Eigennamen, teils als Begriffswort gebraucht. Das Zahlwort deutet [in 'es gibt nur ein Wien'] an, daß der letzte Fall vorliegt. »Wien« ist hier ebenso Begriffswort wie 'Kaiserstadt'. Man kann in diesem Sinne sagen 'Triest ist kein Wien'' (Frege 1892, p. 200).
4. The original is 'nach der Bedeutung der Wörter muss im Satzzusammenhange, nicht in ihrer Vereinzelung gefragt werden' (Frege 1884, p. xxii).
5. The original is '*Rechtmässig* gebildet nenne ich einen Namen, wenn er nur aus solchen Zeichen besteht, welche ursprünglich oder durch Definition eingeführt sind, und wenn diese Zeichen nur als das verwendet sind, als was sie eingeführt sind, also Eigennamen als Eigennamen, Namen von Functionen erster Stufe mit einem Argumente als solche u.s.w., sodass die Argumentstellen immer durch passende Namen oder Marken ausgefüllt sind.' (Frege 1893, p. 45).
6. The original is 'Es genügt, wenn der Satz als Ganzes einen Sinn hat; dadurch erhalten auch seine Theile ihren Inhalt' (Frege 1884, p. 71).
7. Curiously Diamond also says, 'I am not saying 'Any such noun in the argument place will be a proper name',' where the antecedent of 'such' appears to be 'in the singular, ….' I don't understand what she is attempting to deny here.
8. I'm indebted to Robert May for discussion leading to these points.
9. The original is 'Das Ding ist selbständig, insofern es in allen *möglichen* Sachlagen vorkommen kann, aber diese Form der Selbständigkeit ist eine Form des Zusammenhangs mit dem Sachverhalt, eine Form der Unselbständigkeit. (Es ist unmöglich, dass Worte in zwei verschiedenen Weisen auftreten, allein und im Satz.)' (Wittgenstein 1921, p. 200).
10. Some of the materials in this section figure also in section IV of (Shieh Forthcoming).
11. In (Shieh Forthcoming) I connect these notions of necessity to the necessity of logic in the *Tractatus*.
12. Sir Michael Dummett and Cora Diamond are among the philosophers from whom I have learnt the most. I'm grateful to Bernhard Weiss for giving me this opportunity to reflect on the instruction I have received from them. I dedicate this essay to the memory of Sir Michael, a teacher whose kindness and philosophical integrity have few if any equals.

References

Conant, James. 2002. 'The Method of the *Tractatus*,' in *From Frege to Wittgenstein: Perspectives on Early Analytic Philosophy*, ed. Erich H. Reck, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 227–51.

9781137400697_05_cha03.indd 120 2/11/2015 6:49:07 PM

PROOF

Diamond, Cora. 1991a. 'Frege and Nonsense,' in *The Realistic Spirit: Wittgenstein, Philosophy, and the Mind*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 73–93.
——. 1991b. 'What Nonsense might Be,' in *The Realistic Spirit: Wittgenstein, Philosophy, and the Mind*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, pp. 95–114.
——. 1991c. 'What Does a Concept-Script Do?,' in *The Realistic Spirit: Wittgenstein, Philosophy, and the Mind*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 115–44.
Dummett, Michael A. E. 1981. *Frege: Philosophy of Language*, 2nd edn, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
Frege, Gottlob. 1884. *Die Grundlagen der Arithmetik. Eine Logisch-mathematische Untersuchung über den Begriff der Zahl*, Breslau: W. Koebner.
——. 1892. 'Über Begriff und Gegenstand,' *Vierteljahrsschrift für wissenschaftliche Philosophie* **16**: 192–205.
——. 1893. *Grundgesetze der Arithmetik*, Jena: H. Pohle.
——. 1953. *The Foundations of Arithmetic: A Logico-Mathematical Enquiry into the Concept of Number*, 2d rev. ed edn, trans. J. L. Austin, Oxford: Blackwell.
——. 1984. *Collected Papers on Mathematics, Logic, and Philosophy*, Oxford: Blackwell.
——. 2013. *Basic Laws of Arithmetic*, trans. Philip A. Ebert and Marcus Rossberg, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Quine, W. V. 1951. 'Two Dogmas of Empiricism,' *Philosophical Review* **60**: 20–43.
Shieh, Sanford. Forthcoming. 'In What Way Does Logic Involve Necessity?,' *Philosophical Topics*.
Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1921. 'Logisch-philosophische Abhandlung,' *Annalen der Naturphilosophie* **14**: 185–262.
——. 1922. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 2nd impression, with corrections. edn, trans. C. K. Ogden, London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co.

9781137400697_05_cha03.indd 121 2/11/2015 6:49:07 PM

PROOF

4
Making Knowledge of Meaning Explicit

Bernhard Weiss

In Michael Dummett's bold view *the* philosophical project is the analysis of thought; moreover, he argues, the distinctive contribution made by analytic philosophy to this project is to take the analysis of language to be the route to the analysis of thought. The theory of meaning thus becomes for him the foundation of all philosophy. To be sure this is an audacious, but, to some,[1] enchanting, vision of philosophy. It is not a vision that I will go far in defending here; rather I want to begin by noticing a presumption buried – I don't claim it to be buried at all deeply – in this conception. A theory of meaning – what Dummett also calls 'a meaning-theory' – is a specification of the meaning of every expression in some natural language. The question thus forces itself on us: what justifies favouring one such theory over rivals? We need an answer to this question because, without an interesting answer, we might satisfy ourselves with a theory of meaning which fails to discern structure and, indeed, which is trivial in its specification of the meanings of expressions. Analytical Philosophy's momentous step, that step which Dummett hails Frege for having been the first to take, would then be anything but that. Dummett's answer to this question is apparently clear and again obviously bold: the theory ought to articulate or to make explicit speakers' knowledge of their own language. Each (semantic[2]) clause of the theory must be justified as an expression of a piece of knowledge possessed by speakers of the language. So the theory is structured because it reflects the structure of speakers' linguistic capacities. And this brings me to the question of my paper. In what sense do the basic[3] semantic clauses of the theory express speakers' knowledge of meaning? It is clear that speakers don't have explicit knowledge of these clauses in that *qua* competent speaker one *appears* not to have the distinctively metalinguistic concepts employed in the clause and certainly one doesn't have the vocabulary to

9781137400697_06_cha04.indd 122 2/11/2015 6:50:56 PM

PROOF

express the clause. So it is not knowledge that speakers can verbalize by stating the clauses of the theory. In addition, supposing it to be verbalizable appears to make semantic knowledge regressively dependent on prior semantic knowledge. Thus the knowledge comes to be conceived as implicit or tacit:[4] but what here does possession of implicit or tacit semantic knowledge consist in?

The availability of semantic knowledge

Gareth Evans's writings provide a useful foil in clarifying both Dummett's view and his predicament. Here is his argument against claiming that the relevant semantic information is fit to be legitimately conceived of as knowledge. He asks us first to compare a rat's putative belief that a certain stuff is poisonous with a person's genuine belief with the same content.[5] We don't, he thinks, feel any obligation to think of the rat's state as one of genuine belief because of the restricted availability of the information. The rat's 'belief' is manifest purely in the rat's disposition to avoid eating the stuff in question; in contrast, the person's belief is at the service of a range of projects: she too might avoid eating the stuff, but she might also use it to rid herself of a pest, such as a rat, or to poison an enemy or, in small doses, to induce mild sickness as a way of avoiding delivering a dreaded lecture… The range of projects extends indefinitely. Moreover the belief can be fully rationally integrated in the person's thought: it can be used to explain Fred's peakish appearance; it can be inferred from the rat's untimely demise; it can appear as antecedent or consequent in conditional statements and so on.

Our question now becomes this: is a speaker's informational state in relation to basic semantic information akin to the rat's 'beliefs' or akin to the person's beliefs? And Evans's answer is unequivocal: the state is akin only to the rat's 'beliefs'. He writes,

> Possession of tacit knowledge [of the syntactic and semantic rules of the language] is exclusively manifested in speaking and understanding a language; the information is not even potentially at the service of any other project of the agent, nor can it interact with any other beliefs of the agent (whether genuine beliefs or other tacit 'beliefs') to yield further beliefs. (1985: 339)

Speakers do not have genuine knowledge of fundamental semantic information because such information plays a very restricted role only in the production of speech acts. Speakers, as speakers, deploy their 'belief' about the meaning of an expression only in using that expression. Now

9781137400697_06_cha04.indd 123 2/11/2015 6:50:56 PM

PROOF

though one might question whether the activities comprising use of language equate with the rat's simple avoidance of a foodstuff – and I have done; see my (2004) – this is not my current concern. Here I simply wish to concede the point, at least thus far. Speakers' beliefs about the meanings of their terms, in failing to be fully explicit, are tied to the specific activities of producing speech acts; although these 'beliefs' figure in a range of activities they never become the objects of conscious, reflective thought. So we should concede Evans's point that the semantic 'beliefs' are, in this respect disanalogous to full-fledged beliefs. The real issue is what we choose to learn from the disanalogy.

The lesson Evans urges on his reader is that we ought to think of the relevant 'beliefs' in dispositional terms. So he thinks that a 'belief', for instance, in the semantic clause that n denotes o, will correspond to the speaker's disposition to judge that an utterance of, say, the sentence formed by concatenating n with a predicate F, is true just when o satisfies F. Importantly, the disposition is seen not merely as a regularity but as explicable in terms of a unified, underlying causally efficacious state. The drive to discern structure in the semantic theory issues from the requirement that the theory portray the *causal* structure of semantic competence, in particular, that it mesh with the patterns of speakers' acquisition and loss of semantic competence.[6]

This causal story won't however do for Dummett's purposes because he thinks that this is to neglect that rationality of language use, which he extols as 'the rational activity *par excellence*':

> I believe it to be a mistake to think that a full account of linguistic understanding has been provided when its manifestations in the use of language have been described, as I understand Wittgenstein to have supposed, for that in effect reduces mastery of a language to possession of a practical ability: and, for the reasons I have explained, I believe it to be more than that, but something exceedingly difficult to describe. (1993: 161)

To treat the fundamental semantic 'beliefs' dispositionally would be to settle for an account which takes linguistic ability to be a purely practical capacity – at least until linguistic ability reaches a stage which allows some explicit reflection on itself. Dummett's reasons for refusing to adopt such an account can be summarized as follows:

1. The use of language is a fully conscious activity. An activity characterized merely by its achieving the same ends as linguistic interchange, need not be seen as distinctively linguistic because, so construed, it

9781137400697_06_cha04.indd 124 2/11/2015 6:50:56 PM

PROOF

neglects our interest in the *means* a speaker uses to express herself. In general, linguistic acts are rational acts; we assess speakers' motives and intentions in performing them in ways that only make sense if we ascribe knowledge of meaning to speakers. Speakers *choose* their words, that is, choose them on the basis of knowing their meanings.

2. In the absence of possessing the ability one can know enough about what it is to have a practical ability to recognize its exercise. One can recognize competence in swimming or cycling without having the capacity either to swim or to cycle.[7] One cannot recognize exercise of a linguistic ability independently of possessing the ability.
3. One can be ignorant of whether or not one possesses a practical ability – one needs to test oneself out; but one cannot be ignorant of one's knowledge of language.

As Dummett says, this leads us to a conception of semantic 'beliefs', which is exceedingly difficult adequately to describe. Let's briefly reprise the situation: (i) semantic 'beliefs' are not explicit beliefs; (ii) they are at the service of only of a restricted range of activities; (iii) they cannot be construed purely dispositionally since this conflicts with the rationality of language use. What we need to win through to is a conception of basic semantic 'beliefs' which sees them as intrinsically implicated only in activity – thus not available to reflective thought; but which sees them as available to conscious rationality in those activities. Now one, at first sight, promising way to go is back to Evans's rat or, at least, to animal and non-linguistic thought more generally.

Evans's rat has been underdescribed and it may be that when the description is filled out a dispositional construal of its belief is apt; but we could fill out the example in ways that, even here, war with a dispositional account. For we might well imagine that the rat's 'belief' is manifest not merely in a disposition to avoid eating the poison but also in some problem solving ability. As Dummett says about animal thought in general:

> An animal may solve quite complex problems, by a process of thinking out the solution, as was illustrated by Köhler's chimpanzees, or by the pony which, confronted by a cattle-grid, lay down and rolled over it. (1993: 123)

Dummett calls 'beliefs' involved in these kinds of case 'proto-thoughts' and he distinguishes these from full-fledged thought in this way:

> Proto-thought is distinguished from full-fledged thought, as engaged in by human beings for whom language is its vehicle, by its incapacity

9781137400697_06_cha04.indd 125 2/11/2015 6:50:56 PM

PROOF

> for detachment from present activity and circumstances. A human being may be suddenly struck by a thought, which might be the key to a solution of a mathematical problem or the fact that he has left some vital document at home: in the latter case he may turn around and go back for it. An animal, or, for that matter an infant, cannot act in that way.[8] Our thought may float free of the environment: we may follow a train of thought quite irrelevant to our surroundings or what we are engaged in doing. (ibid.: 123; see also 1993a: 148–9)

So at least one feature distinguishing proto-thought from full-fledged thought is that proto-thought, though implicated in rational activity and so, in some way, available to consciousness, is restricted to its involvement with current activity. Full-fledged thinking 'floats free' of one's current environment and activity. Proto-thinking thus seems to provide a perfect parallel to basic linguistic 'beliefs': each is available to rationality, but each is restrictedly involved in performing a range of actions. So it is unsurprising to find Dummett writing:

> Unverbalized thought [or proto-thought] is of importance to an account of human psychology because it is involved in perception and in our manipulation of objects, for example in driving a car, when it can be a highly active process. It also bears upon the philosophical analysis of language itself, since the problem of correctly characterizing a speaker's knowledge of his mother tongue, unsolved by Frege, remains unsolved….[I]t cannot be classified as a practical skill like the ability to swim, since it is not a technique for doing something of which we know in advance what it is to do it; and yet it plainly cannot consist wholly of verbalized knowledge. (1991: 287)

So, it seems Dummett sees some promise in utilizing this model of unverbalized thought or proto-thoughts used by animals in problem solving and by humans in activities such as driving and canoeing (Dummett's examples) where problems are solved in the midst of action seemingly without resort to language.

But here we find Dummett contesting this happy state of affairs:

> Most unverbalized thought on the part of adult human beings is related to fully verbalized thought as a sketch is to a finished picture; it can therefore be explained only in terms of that of which it is a sketch. I believe however, that a restricted number of our thought-processes resemble those of animals in being conducted in an entirely

9781137400697_06_cha04.indd 126 2/11/2015 6:50:57 PM

PROOF

> different medium. These have even less claim to represent something underlying our use of language and explicable independently of it, for like the thought-processes of animals, they cannot even be accurately expressed in words. (1991: 323–4)

The point Dummett is making is, in essence, simple enough. Having a thought which is expressible in words is to have a thought which is conceptually structured and thus presupposes competence with the relevant concepts. To have that conceptual competence is to have an ability to employ the relevant concepts in an indefinite range of other thoughts. Thus someone who can think the thought that there is one dog being friendly to him ought also to be able to entertain thoughts such as that there is one cat ignoring him, or that there is one mushroom beneath the oak. But where proto- or unverbalized thought is concerned no such abilities to entertain other thoughts need be present. So, using Frege's example, Dummett considers a dog which adopts the policy of seeing off neighbouring dogs when he meets them singly, but of attempting to placate them when meeting more than one. Thus we might explain one or another piece of behaviour of the dog by saying that he (proto-)knows that there is just one dog present; or (on another occasion) that he thinks there is more than one dog present; or that he is checking that there is only one dog present. But the dog's proto-thinking fails Evans's Generality constraint: he needn't have the ability to think other thoughts involving the concept, since he need not have another policy which requires the concept *one* in its articulation. His policy might, in this manner, stand alone.

Of course, when we attempt to account for the dog's behaviour we attribute to him thoughts whose content we describe linguistically; but when we do so we distort the true state of affairs. The dog's thought simply fails to have conceptual articulation; so the thought expressed in language has a specificity which the proto-thought lacks: the latter stands to the former 'as sketch to finished picture'.

Underlying Dummett's thinking here is the claim that all thought requires a vehicle. Thought which has a linguistic vehicle cannot have the same content as thought which has a vehicle consisting of spatial sense impressions and images (as Dummett conceives of animals' proto-thoughts), since the structure of the thought is related to the structure of the vehicle and the two vehicles here cannot be seen to have analogous structures.

Let's return to thoughts which underpin linguistic ability. Dummett contends that such thought must be expressible accurately in words. For,

9781137400697_06_cha04.indd 127 2/11/2015 6:50:57 PM

PROOF

on the one hand, this is a presupposition of his philosophical project. The project was to analyse thought by analysing language and to perform the latter by articulating the knowledge comprising linguistic competence. We cannot invest any philosophical faith in this programme if its very first step involves a distortion of the knowledge we are aiming to make explicit. Quite simply this is not an explicitating process that can bear the weight of philosophical interest which Dummett places on it.

Though his concern in the following remarks seems to be with the insistence on an underlying merkmal definition, Wittgenstein's point seems apt in this case too:

> 75. What does it mean to know what a game is? What does it mean to know it and not to be able to say it? Is this knowledge somehow equivalent to an unformulated definition? So that if it were formulated I should be able to recognize it as the expression of my knowledge?
>
> ....
>
> 76. If someone were to draw a sharp boundary I could not acknowledge it as the one that I too always wanted to draw, or had drawn in my mind. For I did not draw one at all. His concept can then be said to be not the same as mine, but akin to it. The kinship is that of two pictures, one of which consists of colour patches with vague contours, and the other of patches similarly shaped and distributed, but with clear contours. The kinship is just as undeniable as the difference.

We haven't here made explicit the original knowledge but constructed a new concept, one bearing similarities and differences to the original; and this was not the goal of the enterprise.

The threat, however, is not just to philosophical theory. The relevant metalinguistic terms, or many of them at any rate, are embedded in our mundane practice. When we formulate claims about meanings by deploying such vocabulary we again put into words content whose nature renders it inapt to find its way accurately into words. Ordinary talk about meanings seems to truck with distortion too. And that's an uncomfortable conclusion to be forced to embrace.

Arguably the discomfort can be made more acute. For meanings are precisely what are expressed in words and what speakers know when they understand an expression is its meaning. So presumably in understanding the expression 'Snow is white' one knows that 'snow is white' means that snow is white. And the expression " 'snow is white' means that snow is white" thus expresses one's knowledge of the sentence's meaning exactly.

9781137400697_06_cha04.indd 128 2/11/2015 6:50:57 PM

PROOF

Thus the content of speakers' knowledge is expressed undistorted in language. Of course, we're concerned with knowledge of the basic clauses of a theory of meaning whose target expressions will be subsentential units. So this reasoning cannot be directly applied to them; but it is utterly mysterious how pieces of knowledge which are distorted when articulated eventuate in pieces of knowledge which are capable of exact linguistic articulation. Perhaps, though the trivial nature of the linguistic expression of speakers' knowledge entails that our question has been begged: sure the knowledge concerned is capable of linguistic expression, once one takes for granted the very words whose understanding is in question. Actually I think the point still stands because the point was one about the conceptual articulation of the knowledge and this seems to be orthogonal to the issue of whether or not the specifications are trivial or not. Let us not push this point to a resolution; we already have ample grounds for thinking that the position is untenable for Dummett.

So, have we reached an impasse? Well it seems clear that, given the difference in their vehicles, proto- and unverbalized thought cannot provide us with a model for the beliefs underlying speakers' use of language. And, as Dummett says, the way forward is exceedingly difficult to see; but we don't as yet have a demonstration of an unsolvable problem. The reason is that the creatures that the theorist of meaning is focused on are not without language: they are, precisely, speakers. But the problem with focusing on speakers' use of language seems to be either that we consider uses of language which fail in themselves to express the knowledge at issue – knowledge of meaning – in which case we seem to collapse back into a view of linguistic competence as a purely practical ability; or that we have ab initio to attribute to speakers an understanding of vocabulary enabling expression of their knowledge, and this is grossly implausible.

Our choices may not be quite as stark as this. Dummett himself points out that a speaker may rightly be seen to have entertained a thought which is accurately expressible in language without deploying the relevant sentence. So, if I'm asked whether I know where George is, my replying 'No' expresses the thought *that I don't know where George is*, though I need not have deployed the sentence 'I don't know where George is' in any manner at all. The point is that *in the context* described the single word utterance succeeds in expressing the relevant thought. Dummett supplies other examples along the following lines: (i) suddenly becoming aware of an image of a colleague's face may remind me *that I need to phone her before leaving the office*, independently of any use of that sentence on the occasion; (ii) someone may return home for no apparent

9781137400697_06_cha04.indd 129 2/11/2015 6:50:57 PM

PROOF

reason having realized that they've forgotten their lunch, without at any point using the sentence about forgetting their lunch. The point is that given the right context we can legitimate ascription of these thoughts and, moreover, need not find ourselves under any pressure to see such a verbal ascription as distorting the thought concerned: our forgetful character may equally be able to realize that not only lunches but notebooks and other things too can be forgotten. The examples concern creatures with language and so creatures who have conceptual expertise; their thoughts can thus be taken to be conceptually structured and therefore can accurately be expressed in language.

This gives us one dimension of freedom since it enables us to see agents as entertaining thoughts, which are accurately expressible in language independently of any deployment of such an expression. But it is doubtful that the examples show that there is an ability to have such thoughts independently of a *capacity* to deploy some such linguistic expression of the thought. We might summarize the problem like this. Since our speakers are language users they can have thoughts about the world which, on suitable occasions, do not involve use of the relevant sentence. But the thoughts that we want to be able to attribute to such speakers are thoughts about their language, meta-linguistic thoughts, and this we've found no way to do independently of attributing to them grasp of the relevant vocabulary used distinctively for semantic reflection: terms such as 'meaning' or 'denotes'. So what we need in order to solve this problem is to justify treating a deployment of a sentence couched purely in object linguistic vocabulary as expressing appropriate metalinguistic beliefs about meanings.

Here is Wittgenstein addressing his version of the difficulty:

> In such a difficulty always ask yourself: how did we *learn* the meaning of this word ("good" for instance)? From what sort of examples? In what language games? (77)
>
> 78. Compare *knowing* and *saying*:
>
> how many feet high Mont Blanc is –
>
> how the word 'game' is used –
>
> how a clarinet sounds.
>
> If you are surprised that one can know something and not be able to say it, you are perhaps thinking of a case like the first. Certainly not like the third.

Nor should we be tempted to think that cases like the third are cases of purely practical capacities: such knowledge may figure in one's choice

9781137400697_06_cha04.indd 130 2/11/2015 6:50:57 PM

PROOF

to play the saxophone rather than the clarinet for a particular piece, in a particular setting. But the vehicle for such thoughts shows that they cannot be accurately expressed in words. And what we wanted to understand is cases like the second where someone who has the knowledge need not be able to give it a fully explicit articulation, despite its (supposedly) being susceptible to such an articulation.

My proposal is the following. In an appropriate context what appears to be – in other words, what in other circumstances *is* – an ordinary object linguistic assertion can be taken to be an *expression* of one's, metalinguistic, knowledge of meaning. So, for instance, when the colour of a bead is perfectly clear to both teacher and learner and neither has any real interest in the bead's colour, the learner's use of 'This is blue' is not an assertion about the bead – is not an expression of this piece of empirical knowledge – but an expression of her knowledge of the meaning of 'blue'. Wittgenstein makes this point in relation to grasp of a concept. Contrasting grasp of the concept with implicit grasp of a definition he writes:

> Isn't my knowledge, my concept of a game, completely *expressed* in explanations that I could give? That is, in my describing various kinds of game; shewing how all sorts of other games can be constructed on the analogy of these; saying that I should scarcely include this or that among games; and so on. (75; my emphasis)

One expresses not (or not merely) that a certain activity is a game in saying 'This is a game' but one expresses (one doesn't merely manifest) one's grasp of the concept; and, though Wittgenstein doesn't make this point, in using the word 'game' on this occasion one expresses (one doesn't merely manifest) one's knowledge of the meaning of the word.

What distinguishes expressing one's knowledge from manifesting it? Well a speaker certainly manifests her knowledge of meaning – however construed – in her competent use of language. But, in doing so, she does not aim to manifest that knowledge. On the contrary, her aim may simply be to convey appropriate information, warn, or offer advice. When she expresses her knowledge of meaning she performs a linguistic act with the aim of conveying her possession of that knowledge. Features of the context, which constrain the sort of aims it makes sense to think of her as having, and which reveal the kind of justification she might offer for her assertion, will attest to the kind of act she is performing; whether she is expressing or merely manifesting her knowledge.

So the shape of the suggestion is this: speakers can express their knowledge of meaning through object linguistic uses of language, given

9781137400697_06_cha04.indd 131 2/11/2015 6:50:58 PM

PROOF

an appropriate context. Such knowledge is capable of being accurately expressed in words, because it *is* expressed in words, albeit given the support of very particular contexts. In addition, such knowledge can be accurately expressed in words which rely on no contextual setting, that is, it can be made fully explicit. Thus, explicitating is not a transition from a non-linguistic to a linguistic vehicle, with attendant distortions; but a freeing of the thought, linguistically expressed, from the particular context which permits it to find that linguistic expression. The thought, once explictated, is able to 'float free' from the speaker's current activity; it becomes an object of reflection, fully rationally integrated in thought and apt for incorporation in theory.

The sticking point in the whole business is this. The process of explicitating will require use of semantic concepts expressed in meta-linguistic vocabulary; how do we justify ascribing such conceptual competence to speakers whose mastery of language is confined to the object linguistic level? We seemed able to ascribe the thought about forgetting one's lunch to the forgetful character, because we suppose that she has the concept of forgetting, that is, grasps the meaning of 'forget' or some analogue. Here, since we cannot plausibly ascribe understanding of the meta-linguistic vocabulary, we seem to have no grounds for ascribing grasp of the relevant concepts.

The answer is that speakers are never masters of a purely object linguistic practice; mastery of such a practice always involves mastery of what I have elsewhere called an associated policing practice, namely, a practice of monitoring moves in the object level practice as being correct or incorrect and of acknowledging correction by means of retraction; and this entails that speakers are not merely aware of the proprieties of use; but that they are aware of them *as* proprieties. What do I mean by this?

One might imagine a community of creatures which react to one another's performances in ways that promote certain regularities in those performances. No behaviour, given only this bald account, could be taken to be that of correction or acknowledgement of correction; rather there would simply be behaviours which bring about a change in others' dispositions and whose effect is to bring those dispositions into line. But linguistic and other normative practices are different. In these rules are instituted and instituted in such a way that practitioners are aware of themselves as being bound by rules. For this to be the case pieces of behaviour must be taken to be corrections; the practitioner who is corrected shows that she takes the behaviour to be a correction by accepting it and retracting her original move or by rejecting it and refusing to retract. So practitioners in a genuinely normative practice

9781137400697_06_cha04.indd 132 2/11/2015 6:50:58 PM

PROOF

have grasp of a *generally applicable* move within such a practice which counts as correction; that is, a generally applicable normative move whose target is other normatively constrained moves. My claim is that this is to have conceptual expertise, to have the concept of correctness, which is appropriately meta-linguistic. If that's right then the knowledge expressed by saying, in the right context, 'This is blue' is the very same knowledge as that expressed in the meta-linguistic, context-independent specification of the meaning of 'blue': if Dummett has the basic clauses of his meaning theory right then they can be taken as specifications of what speakers know about their own language.

Allow me briefly to reprise the point. To speak a language is to be a practitioner in a normatively governed practice. One cannot engage in such a practice unless one is conscious of having one's practice bound by norms. There can be no consciousness of this sort unless one is aware of the normative status of moves within the practice. Since the normative status of a move within the practice is constituted by whether or not it is apt to be sanctioned, the practice must include moves whose role is to sanction or to veto other moves. And I've also said that recognition of a move as a veto requires there to be moves whose role is to retract. The important point here is that proficiency in relation to moves which sanction and veto is to have mastery over moves whose scope is applicable generally to other moves in the practice. Since the move is generally applicable it warrants being seen as conceptual mastery and since its range of application is other moves in the practice the relevant concept is second order in relation to the practice; where the practice is linguistic the relevant concepts are meta-linguistic. So, in sum, a speaker can only be a speaker if she has a concept of correctness applicable to uses of words.

This doesn't, of course, solve our problem; since, to do that, we would have to go on to say *how* pieces of knowledge articulated using vocabulary expressing just those normative concepts with which speakers can be credited suffice for the needs of theories of meaning and of understanding.[9] That would obviously be a big step in setting up the base of such a theory. However, if one is wedded to the idea that the institution of norms within a linguistic practice is responsible for the institution of meaning then one will be committed to the claim *that* pieces of knowledge articulated using vocabulary expressing just those normative concepts with which speakers can be credited suffice for the needs of theories of meaning and of understanding. And, if the sketched argument of this paper can be filled in, then anyone committed to the rationality of speech acts is likewise committed.[10]

9781137400697_06_cha04.indd 133 2/11/2015 6:50:58 PM

PROOF

Notes

My title is obviously mildly adapted from that of Brandom's tome, *Making it Explicit*.

1. Including myself.
2. For reasons that will become apparent soon there may be a bifurcation here between the semantic and syntactic clauses.
3. I focus on what I call 'basic clauses' because with some clauses it will not be implausible to think that they capture speakers' explicit knowledge. For instance, in cases where a term is introduced by explicit definition, the clause of the meaning-theory might well simply be a statement of the definition.
4. Dummett tends to use the term 'implicit' but other writers, perhaps following Evans use the term 'tacit'. The distinction often evaporates but sometimes is the following: implicit knowledge is a species of genuine knowledge whereas tacit knowledge is not genuine knowledge but only akin to it.
5. That they can have the same content is a significant assumption, one which will be an issue for us below. But let us grant the assumption here and focus on the nature of the attitude.
6. See Evans (1985: 329–33), also Martin Davies on the Mirror Constraint in his 1987.
7. So in many sports we have non-playing coaches but no physics teacher who isn't herself, in some sense, a physicist.
8. One might dispute this but my interest here is obviously not in understanding animal thought in general but with whether a model of (an aspect) of it can be recruited in understanding basic semantic knowledge.
9. Brandom's *Making it Explicit* is our most developed model here.
10. It is a pleasure to thank Carrol Clarkson for comments on a previous draft; comments from an anonymous reviewer also helped to improve the piece.

References

Brandom, R. 1994. *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment*. Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press.

Davies, M. 1987. 'Tacit Knowledge and Semantic Theory. Can a Five Percent Difference Matter?' *Mind*, 96, 441–62.

Dummett, Michael A. E. 1993b. *Origins of Analytical Philosophy*. London: Duckworth.

——. 1993a. *The Seas of Language*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

——. 1991. *Frege and Other Philosophers*. Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press.

——. 1978. *Truth and Other Enigmas*. London: Duckworth.

Evans, Gareth. 1985. *Collected Papers*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Weiss, Bernhard. 2004. 'Knowledge of Meaning' *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 104 (01/01), 75–94.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1958. *Philosophical Investigations*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Blackwell.