

Why Meaning Intentions are Degenerate

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1. Introductory Remarks

The relations between intention, linguistic meaning, and normativity have been explored with subtlety and analytical power by Crispin Wright in a number of essays that have focused on Wittgenstein's and Kripke's discussion of the nature of rule-following.¹

This paper will present an argument –an essentially Fregean argument-- to put into doubt a fairly widespread assumption about the normative nature of linguistic meaning by looking at the relation that linguistic meaning bears to an agent's linguistic intentions.² I believe that there are elements in Wright's thinking about self-knowledge of intentionality and meaning that, to some extent, support my scepticism. But since he has never taken an explicit position resisting the assumption of the normative nature of linguistic meaning, I would be very curious to know where he stands on the matter and on the particular argument owing to Fregean considerations offered here.

In several passages in his mature work where Wittgenstein discusses the nature of intentional phenomena, focusing most particularly on intentions (as well as expectations), he is keen to distinguish viewing them as mental

processes and *experiences* from viewing them in terms of the intentions' (or expectations') *fulfillment*. This latter is the idea of elements in the world (including our own actions) that are in *accord* with these intentional states. Thus, just as Crispin Wright's walking in through my front door is a fulfillment of a certain expectation that I have (the expectation that he will come to a reading group we have arranged to have at my place on a Friday morning), so is my act of taking an umbrella a fulfillment of my intention to do so on a rainy morning. Both are described as being in 'accord' with the intentional states in question.

The terms 'fulfillment' and 'accord' convey something that is describable as 'normative' in a very broad sense of the term. Things are 'right' in some sense when there is accord and fulfillment of this kind, wrong if there is not. Such is the minimal normativity of intentional states. Sticking with 'intentions', which will be the particular intentional state that is the focus of my paper, if I were to intend to take an umbrella but took a walking stick instead of an umbrella by mistake, then it would be, well, 'a mistake' by these broadly conceived normative lights. So Wittgenstein's view (not explicitly made in these terms, but implicitly very much part of his picture of intentionality in his mature work) is that the very idea of intention is such that it generates an ideal or norm of correctness, something by the lights of which one can assess one's actions for being correct or wrong, depending on whether they are or fail to be in accord with the intention.

What is the philosophical force behind such talk of the normativity of intentional states? Its force is contrastive: not merely a contrast with the apparently processual and experiential aspects of mentality just mentioned, but also with what Kripke brought to centre stage in his book on

Wittgenstein, the dispositional character of mental states. Put most generally, the contrasts are asserted with anti-psychologistic ends in mind: the normative is set against the psychologism of process and of inner experiences as well as of mental tendencies and propensities. Since these contrasts are well known in the discussion of these topics, I will not labour them here beyond saying that normativity, so conceived, is said to be constitutive of intentional states, and if that is so, it puts into doubt that the processual, the inner experiential, and the dispositional, can really be what is primary in our philosophical understanding of intentionality.

There is no gainsaying the centrality of such a normative element in the very idea of intentions, in particular, and intentionality, in general. What I want to question is whether what is true as a general point is true in the case of *linguistic* intentions, in particular the intentions that speakers have regarding the meanings of their words. Might these not be a very special kind of exception to the generality of this truth, providing a sort of limiting or degenerate case of intention and intentionality?

Here is how I have allowed myself to think of it.

2. Getting Meaning Intentions Right

What are the intentions one has when one says things or means things with one's words (restricting ourselves to assertoric statements for the sake of simplicity and convenience)?

Since Grice's analysis³ (I should say 'analyses' since he fortified his initial analysis in subsequent work⁴) of meaning, which linked meaning with

intention explicitly and elaborately, is so canonical, let us take that as a point of departure.

The initial part of his analysis points out that when we say things we have certain nested intentions to have some effect on hearers. In the assertoric case, the intention is to get them to acquire certain beliefs --say, about the world in one's near vicinity. Thus for instance, someone says "That is a snake" with the intention to get someone else to believe that there is a snake in one's path. (In Grice's analysis this intention, as I said, nests with two others --at least--⁵ whose point is to ensure that the case is a case of getting someone to believe something by *telling* someone something rather than merely getting it across to them, something that could not be ensured with just that one intention. What prompts these other two nesting intentions that go into the first part of the analysis are not relevant to the concerns of this paper.)

But, in Grice, this analysis invoking these three nested intentions is supposed to be just the beginning of an analysis of meaning. One has to add various things to move from an account of *speaker's* meaning, which this analysis provides, to an account of *sentence* meaning. The speaker's meaning of the words uttered is analyzed in terms of the specific purpose or intention that the speaker has on that occasion (in the canonical assertoric cases, to get someone to believe something). The sentence meaning is the meaning of the words that the speaker takes his words to have --in Grice's rhetoric-- 'timelessly'. This contrast between what the analysis provides in this first stage with the three nested intentions (i.e., speaker's meaning) and sentence meaning is most explicitly visible or audible when they fail to coincide *even on the surface*, as for instance in metaphors or in indirect

speech acts. In a metaphor, one might say some words, such as the familiar ‘Man is a wolf’ with the intention of getting someone to believe that “Human beings are competitive”, in indirect speech acts one might say some words, such as, “The train is about to leave” with the intention to get someone to believe that they ought to walk faster and get on the train. The three intentions of Grice’s analysis do not provide the analysis of the sentence meaning, only of what the speaker meant to convey to the hearer on that occasion with the utterance of those words. The speaker does not take the respective *sentences* to mean that human beings are competitive or that someone ought to walk faster. He does intend to get the hearer to believe that human beings are competitive in the one case and that he ought to walk faster in the other, but that is merely speaker’s meaning; what he takes the sentences he utters to mean is something quite else.

Grice gave additional analysis of the sentence meaning that the utterance possesses and initially seemed to have some hope that one could build up to sentence meaning on the basis of the intentions that go into the analysis of speaker’s meaning, with as few extraneous elements as possible. Thus, for instance, one might think that sentence meaning might be *built up* out of speaker’s meaning by saying that it is given in terms of the intentions that speakers *usually* have on given occasions of utterance of that sentence. Later there was some suggestion (by Jonathan Bennett, for instance)⁶ that Lewis’s work⁷ on *convention* might need to be brought in to go from speaker’s meaning to sentence meaning since the statistical ideal of ‘usual’ was too contingent and unprincipled to achieve the analysis. I will not pause to expound here these various struggles among Griceans towards such further analysis since it is not Gricean exegesis that I am primarily interested in.

Suffice it to say that in a careful commentary on Grice, Stephen Schiffer⁸ came to what was then widely considered to be a sensible conclusion: that Grice needs to bring in something like a truth-conditional analysis of the sentence meaning -- ‘timeless meaning’ -- that the speaker takes his words to have, over and above what *he* means on that occasion with the utterance of that sentence. Since truth-conditional analyses of sentence meaning are very familiar by now, let me for the sake of convenience assume that it is they rather than some other analysis that will be the best account of sentence meaning. (If someone were to doubt Schiffer’s claim and give some other analysis of sentence-meaning, that should not spoil what I want to say here, since all I want to say, is that even in Grice there is a distinction between speaker’s meaning given in his initial analysis with those three nested intentions, and sentence meaning. Which analysis best accounts for the latter makes no difference to my purposes.) The chief point that needs to be made is that in my examples, the truth-conditions of the sentences by no means coincide with what the initial Gricean analysis of the speakers’ meaning, yields.

This point is well known; still, it is worth being explicit about it. It would be quite wrong to say that the speaker has in mind that “‘Man is a wolf’ is true if and only if human beings are competitive” or “‘The train is about to leave’ is true if and only if the hearer ought to walk faster and get on the train”. Rather, he takes it to be the case that “‘Man is a wolf’ is true if and only if man is a wolf” and “‘The train is about to leave’ is true if and only if the train is about to leave”. These are his sentence-meanings and they depart on the visible surface, in these examples, from the speaker’s meaning. And the important point remains that even in cases where there is *no* visible

departure of this obvious kind as there is in metaphors or indirect speech acts, one should nevertheless acknowledge the difference between speaker's meaning and sentence meaning. If someone were to say "Human beings are competitive" with the intention to get someone to believe that human beings are competitive that would still leave intact the distinction between speaker's meaning and sentence meaning since the latter would be given by the truth conditions of the sentence, not the intention to get someone to believe something that *happens to coincide* (in *this* but *not* other cases) with what is specified by the truth-conditions of the sentence.

Though, as I said, that point is well known, there is a source of possible confusion here against which we should protect ourselves because it is crucial to a point that will come later. I, following Grice and others, have said that when a speaker says something, the sentence meaning is something (relatively) independent of the intentions he has which are emphasized in Grice's initial analysis, because the initial analysis is only of speaker's meaning, of what *he* means on that occasion. This may give the quite wrong impression that sentence meaning is not to be thought of as something that *he* means *at all*, that it attaches to the words he utters but are not meant *by him*, in any sense. But it *is* indeed *he* (the *speaker*) who also takes the sentence he utters to have a sentence meaning over and above what he intends someone to believe with the utterance of that sentence....The speaker is not left out of the picture in sentence-meaning. Just because sentence meaning is contrasted with speaker's meaning, it doesn't follow that it is not *speakers* who *take* their utterances to have sentence meaning. It is not as if the sentences uttered by speakers possess meaning in some ulterior way and the speakers who speak them don't take them to have that meaning. (Grice's

rhetoric of ‘timeless’ as opposed to ‘occasional’ meaning --clearly echoing the ‘sentence’/‘speaker’ meaning distinction-- may also mislead in the same way and that too should be guarded against. Just because so-called ‘timeless’ meaning is contrasted with what a speaker means on an occasion, it doesn’t mean that it is not the *speaker on that occasion* who *takes* it to have that timeless meaning.)

Let us now return to the question of the normativity of intentional states as laid out in Wittgenstein’s characterization of them, in particular his normative characterization of intentions. Our question, as I said, is the relation between the normative nature of intentions and the normative nature of meaning. More specifically, if, as Grice shows, intentions are deeply involved in meaning, what I want to explore is the extent to which the normative nature of intentions imparts, or is of a piece with, the alleged normativity of meaning,

What is often said in the literature on this subject is this. Our terms (at any rate many of them) apply to things, and to misapply them is to make a mistake with our terms; and *the very possibility of such mistakes* amounts to the normativity built into the meanings of our terms. Thus we are right when we apply the term ‘snake’ to snakes but not to any other thing. When related to our intentional utterances of sentences with these terms, such a view of the normativity of meaning amounts, then, to something like this. We intend to say things with the words we utter. Thus --staying, as we have, with assertoric utterances-- one might utter, “That is a snake” with the intention of applying those words to a snake in one’s path. Now, should it turn out that what is in front of us is, say, a rope and not a snake, we would have gotten things *wrong*; and that possibility of getting things wrong redeems in the

particular case of meaning things with ones words, Wittgenstein's *general* idea (true of all intentions whether they are in play in meaning or in anything else) that intentions are, in their essence, normative. Such intentions as the one just mentioned with which one utters words such as the ones just cited, are just examples of intentions targeting specifically, not actions such as taking one's umbrella but rather linguistic actions. Just as one might make a mistake and not take one's umbrella (taking a walking stick instead), so also one might make a mistake and say, "That is a snake" in the presence of a rope. In both cases, it is the possibility of such mistakes that reveals the intrinsic normativity of intentions, but in the second case in particular this normativity of intentions captures for meaning (a notion, we have acknowledged to be undeniably tied to intentions) via the intentions with which words are uttered, a special case of this same normativity.

Thus the normativity of the meaning of terms that comes from the idea of the correct or incorrect application of our terms *passes over* into the normativity of the *intentions with which we use our terms* in utterances. We act *in accord* with these intentions to use words, the intention, say, to use the words "That is a snake" to apply to a snake, only when we do so in the presence of snakes, not in the presence of anything else. That it should pass over in this way might be said to be a very important claim in Wittgenstein because unlike Platonic conceptions of the normativity of meaning, shunned by him, this sort of normativity does not owe to abstractions such as Plato's 'forms' or 'ideas' but merely to the intentions with which words are used by linguistic agents. Misapplication of a term is not the violation of a norm because it falls afoul of some abstracted ideal (the CONCEPT snake) but

because terms are used in utterances with intentions and we can act in ways that fail to be in accord with those intentions.

That is what is often said in the philosophical literature.⁹ But there is very good reason to doubt that this picture of the normativity of meaning gets things right. Even a cursory look at what we have been saying about Grice should reveal what the grounds of doubt are, but before I relate it to Grice, let me say what seems obviously wrong with such a view of the normativity of meaning. What it gets wrong is the intention that is relevant to *meaning*. The intention it identifies as being relevant to meaning is in fact relevant to something quite else. The intention relevant to meaning, when one makes assertoric utterances such as the one in the example we are discussing, is not 1) “One utters the words ‘That is a snake’ with the intention of applying them to a snake in one’s path”. Rather it is 2) “One utters the words ‘That is a snake’ with the intention of saying something which is true if and only if that is a snake --or true if and only if there is a snake in one’s path.” [Once again, I mention truth-conditions in 2) for the sake of mere convenience since it is the most widely held analysis of sentence meaning. If someone had another view of sentence meaning than a truth-conditional one --say, one invoking verification or assertibility conditions-- one could reformulate 2) accordingly.]

Returning now to normativity: we have said, surely uncontroversially, that the *possibility of getting it wrong* is a necessary condition for normativity, in this (or any other) matter. And in linguistic examples (of assertoric utterances in particular) that possibility was supposed to be actualized in cases of the misapplication of terms, cases such as when one says ‘That is a snake’ in the presence of, say, a rope. So let us suppose that

one does say those words when there is no snake but a rope in front of one. If one assumes that it is intentions of the form 1) which are relevant to meaning in assertoric utterances, then one is indeed making a mistake. But if one assumes that it is intentions of the form 2) which are relevant to meaning, then no mistake is being made (about *meaning*) at all when one utters those words in those circumstances. Even if a rope rather than a snake is present, one's intention to say something with certain truth-conditions (something which is true if and only if there is a snake there) is an intention that is impeccably met in these circumstances. The fact that there is a rope and not a snake, which is present in the vicinity, does not affect in the slightest the aptness of that intention about *meaning*.¹⁰

Thus it is only by misidentifying the intention relevant to meaning that one is led to think that examples such as these are revealing of the normativity of meaning because they have revealed the built-in possibility of mistakes. These are not mistakes of meaning. They are quite other sorts of mistakes, mistakes due to misperceptions, as in this particular example –in other examples they may be due to quite other causes.

It won't help to say that the idea of mistakes of meaning has to do with the misapplication of *terms*, so one must find intentions targeting the terms in the sentence uttered and show that *those too* are fulfilled when there are ropes rather than snakes present. It is true that I have only focused on intentions that target the utterances of whole sentences, but the analysis carries over perfectly to intentions that target the terms that compose uttered sentences as well, assuming for the moment that we do have such intentions. Suppose when I utter, "That is a snake", I have a meaning intention that targets, just the word 'snake'. What shall we identify as the meaning

intention for that term? Should it be, “I intend to apply ‘snake’ to a snake” or should it be “I intend to utter a term, a predicate, that is satisfied if and only if there is a snake there”. I claim that it is the latter intention that is properly thought of as a meaning intention. And one has acted in accord with it, even if there is a rope in front of one. It is only the former intention that one has failed to act in accord with, in that circumstance. Misapplication of terms is beside the point (or beside the primary point) as far as meaning intentions are concerned, whether the intentions target the utterance of whole sentences or the terms that compose those sentences.

What I have said about getting the intentions relevant to meaning correctly identified can be related in detail to the exposition of Grice I presented earlier. In order to keep the main line of argument of the entire paper uncluttered and undistracted by detail, however, I will elaborate these relations to Grice in Appendix I of the paper, which picks up from just this point where I leave the matter now.

If the argument so far is convincing, the deep issue then becomes: now that we have *properly* identified the intentions relevant to meaning, what follows about the normativity of meaning? I had said, surely uncontroversially, that it is the *possibility* of mistakes (in the case of meaning, it would be, what I called, ‘failures of accord’ with one’s meaning intentions) in which the general idea of normativity is revealed. We must then ask: if the possibility of such things as mistaking ropes for snakes does not amount to the relevant kind of normativity-revealing failures of accord with one’s meaning intentions for assertoric utterances such as “That is a snake”, what sort of thing does amount to it? I pose this question in just this way in order to invite the following suspicion: can *anything* amount to a

failure to act in accord with the intention we have now properly identified as being relevant to the meaning of utterances of that kind? That is, is there so much as a *possibility* of being mistaken about meaning. If, as the suspicion is supposed to suggest, the answer to this question is “No”, then one puts into doubt the idea that meaning is normative, at least to the extent that such normativity is supposed to derive from the (undeniable) normativity of intentionality, in general, and of intentions, in particular. I think it is arguable that the answer to this question *is* ‘No’.

3. Can One Fail to Fulfill Meaning Intentions?

Once properly identified, we have learnt that the intention relevant to meaning targets the truth conditions of one’s words. Hence the failure to fulfill that intention would presumably occur only if one failed to get right what their truth conditions *are* ---as opposed to occurring when the truth conditions, which one gets right, fail to *hold* (in our example, when there is no snake but a rope in front of one).

How, then, might one fail to get right what the truth conditions of the sentences one utters, are?

One clear sense in which it might be supposed that one can fail to get them right –or better, one clear *source* for one’s failing to get them right -- is if one does not *know* what they are. (There is another supposed source, which I will take up a little later.)

The idea here will have to be that there are cases in which, because I don’t know what the truth conditions of my words are, when I intend that

they have certain truth conditions, they are not the correct truth conditions of those words. So a question arises: why should the truth conditions of one's words not always be what one intends them to be? We will return to this question at the end. But first let's ask: how exactly is it that one can intend our words to possess truth conditions they don't in fact possess *as a result of* one *not knowing* what the truth conditions are? Let's take an example, a familiar one from the philosophical literature, of such an occurrence.¹¹ A medical ignoramus intends to say some words that are true if and only if he has a disease either of the joints or ligaments in his thigh. And he says, "I have arthritis in my thigh". He doesn't know that arthritis is a disease of the joints only. So he has said something with truth conditions other than the truth conditions he intended. He has failed to act in accord with his intention. This looks like an example of how, when one does not know what the words one intends to utter mean, one can say something that fails to live up to an intention that (unlike the intention in the example about snakes and ropes) is properly identified as being relevant to meaning.

The crucial task now is to assess this claim that one may not know the meanings of the words one intends to speak. Here I do not think the primary question to be asked is: what theoretical account of meaning allows it to be the case that a speaker does not know what he means? It is easy to devise a number of such accounts and they have been devised ever since Plato's highly objectivized notions of meaning understood as given in a heavenly world of 'forms' or 'ideas', with contemporary versions bringing Plato's heaven down to earth and calling it 'society' or 'community'. Any assessment of the claim needs instead to step back and ask the *prior* question whether we can *tolerate* any theoretical account of meaning in which we

breezily allow speakers to fail to know the meanings or truth conditions of their own intended words, and that, in turn, means stepping even further back to ask: by what criteria shall we decide what is and is not tolerable in a theoretical account of meaning thought of in terms of truth conditions?

Responsible stepping back of this sort requires one to at least notice the historical fact that the idea that the meaning of a sentence is given by its truth-conditions was first explicitly formulated in Frege's doctrine of *sense* and so it is perhaps in the notion of sense that we should seek the criteria by which we can assess what seems tolerable or not in an account of meaning.¹² What we will or will not tolerate will depend, therefore, on stating what the notion of sense was introduced to do and see whether it *will* do what it was introduced to do, if we allow that one may not know the senses or meanings of one's words. So let's ask: what is a notion of sense (or meaning) for?

In Frege, as we know, the notion is introduced initially to solve a puzzle about identity. Though that is the occasion in Frege for theoretically motivating the notion of sense, he had in mind very large issues in raising the puzzle about identity -- the puzzle is a mere surface reflection of one of the most deep and fundamental issues about the relations between language and mind. In fact, Frege's own formulations of the puzzle and his solution to the puzzle don't always make explicit just how deep and fundamental the issue at stake is. One way of putting the point at stake is to describe it as follows: to be misinformed or uninformed is not to be irrational. No account of the mind can confuse these two ways in which a mind can go wrong. Failures of empirical knowledge and logical error are not to be conflated. The puzzle arises precisely because the examples discussed by Frege (and by Kripke, who raises a slightly different version of it) threaten to conflate them.¹³ The

protagonist in the puzzle who, ex hypothesi, merely lacks worldly knowledge of the identity of a planet (or in Kripke's version, a city) is threatened with a charge of irrationality by precisely such an elementary conflation. And it is Frege's view (though not Kripke's) that introducing the notion of sense will provide the best solution to the puzzle. It is the notion of sense or meaning which makes it clear that no irrationality, no inconsistency, is entailed by someone saying, for example, that "Hesperus is bright" and "Phosphorus is not bright" or "Londres et jolie" and "London is not pretty"....So the puzzle lays down a crucial desideratum: we know the protagonist in the puzzle to be someone who merely lacks knowledge of an a posteriori identity, so we must find a way to characterize his mentality (or this fragment of his mentality) as representing a completely consistent state of affairs. Since it is the positing of senses to his words (over and above their reference) which, according to Frege, helps us achieve such a representation, *nothing* should be tolerated in our understanding of senses that prevents them from decisively carrying out this task. In other words, nothing should be tolerated in the understanding of the notion of sense or meaning, which will prevent senses from doing what they are supposed to do: solve the puzzle and, by doing so, maintain the most fundamental of philosophical distinctions --that between logical error or irrationality and lack of empirical knowledge.

The fact is that senses will *not* decisively solve the Frege style puzzles if it is allowed that we fail to know our own senses or meanings. A failure of transparency in sense will leave it entirely possible that the puzzles about identity can arise *one level up* and so the puzzles will not be satisfactorily solved; or better, they will not once and for all be *arrested*. Let me explain.

If someone does not know his own senses, he may be in a position to be just as confused as Frege's protagonist in the puzzle, thinking that there are two senses rather than one. Suppose someone wonders, in his ignorance of astronomy: "I wonder if Hesperus is Phosphorus." To make such a wondering so much as intelligible, a Fregean posits senses. But if the wonderer doesn't know his own senses, he may similarly wonder, one step up, if the sense of 'Hesperus' is the same as the sense of "Phosphorus" (or as in Benson Mates pointed out in an ever so slightly different context of discussion, he may wonder whether --or doubt that-- the sense of 'bachelor' is the sense of 'unmarried man'.)¹⁴ Thus, there is no genuine arrest of the Frege puzzle (and no eventual solution to it, therefore) if it is not laid down as a basic criterion of senses that they be transparent, i.e., known to their possessors. Without this being laid down, the puzzle can always arise one step up, with protagonists as confused about the identity of their senses as they are about planets and cities.

One implication of this --and a very deep one-- is that it amounts to something like a proof that senses are not the sorts of things that we can have multiple perspectives on such that one can get their identities confused in the way that we can with planets and cities. Whatever senses are, then, they are not the kind of things that planets and cities are. They are not like any thing which allows multiple perspectives on itself and which therefore allows such confusion to be possible. Things on which we can have more than one perspective are by their nature not transparent, even if they are often in fact known. I suspect that it is, at least partly, because Kripke doesn't quite see this point about the sort of thing senses are that he doesn't follow Frege in invoking senses when he addresses the puzzle.

Those, then, are the considerations that make it intolerable for meanings to not be known by those who speak meaningful words: we will not be guaranteed to solve the Fregean puzzles, at least not in a way that arrests them once and for all; and that, in turn, amounts to meanings failing to do the very thing that meanings and senses were introduced to do, viz., allowing one to preserve a fundamental distinction of philosophy between logical error and lack of empirical knowledge. We should therefore regard with suspicion the many accounts of meaning from Plato's down to the secular and mundane versions of Plato in our own time, which allow such an intolerable outcome as a result of prising apart our meanings from our knowledge of them.

The medically ignorant man who says "I have arthritis in my thigh", therefore, though he certainly makes a mistake, makes a mistake about how the term is used in the social linguistic practice, especially among the medically informed experts. His own linguistic practice is not grooving with theirs. *That* is his only mistake, apart from the, *ex hypothesi*, medical ignorance. *He makes no mistake of failing to act (speak) in accord with his meaning intentions.* The words on his lips are intended by him to mean something that is true if and only if he has a disease of the joints or ligaments in his thigh, he says and thinks something that is both *self-known* to him and something that *is perfectly true*.

After I set up more conceptual apparatus, I will say more about how to represent this idea of his own individual, idiosyncratic practice (see particularly the long footnote 26). But until then, let me briefly address two immediate false impressions that the very idea of such idiosyncrasy in meaning often prompts.

First: it may seem that allowing such idiosyncrasy in our understanding of linguistic meaning would be in some way to undermine the stability of linguistic practice, the regularity of usage that makes interpretation of one another possible. It is these regularities that are captured in the norms of meaning, which the views I am opposing insist on (presumably norms such as ‘arthritis’ *ought* to be used to refer to a disease of the joints only, etc.), norms which someone may fail to know and therefore fail to know his own meanings when he uses a word like ‘arthritis’, as in the example above. Without such norms, there would be no stability in linguistic practice, it will be said, so I have only managed to say that meaning intentions *are* fulfilled in these cases (and meanings and truth-conditions are self-known by speakers in such cases) by a theoretical move that destabilizes linguistic practice. I will say more about the point and rationale for norms of meaning towards the end of the paper -- for now notice a quite straightforward confusion in this anxiety. It is undoubtedly true that there would have to be a fair amount of regularity in the use of words, for speakers to be intelligible to each other and interpretable by one another. But regularity in usage does not amount to norms. Norms say such things as “Use ‘arthritis’ in such and such a way”. One may violate *any* such so-called norm of meaning attaching to *any* word and *be understood* by others, even if, when such a violation occurs with any such word, it puts others to a bit of strain before they understand one. This happens constantly in communication and the utterance of the medical ignoramus just discussed is only one such example. That, in itself, is quite sufficient to show that *understanding* does not require norms of meaning. So if there are norms of meaning, they don’t have anything to do with any notion of understanding. They are not constitutive of any notion of meaning that is captured in such

expressions as “I understand the meaning of what you just said”. Perhaps they are constitutive of some other notion of meaning. Whatever that notion of meaning is, it does not seem necessary to capture the stability of linguistic practice and the intelligibility and interpretability of one speaker by another. Neither, therefore, are norms necessary to such stability. It is true that if there was widespread idiosyncrasy in usage and no or virtually no regularity, there would be no communication and mutual understanding possible, but to say that is to say nothing about there being norms of meaning. All that it says is that for understanding each other’s utterances to be possible, there must be some *general* and *background* regularity in the way we use words. Given this general, background regularity, *any* particular word may be idiosyncratically used and be understood.

Second: there is a common impression that an admission of idiosyncrasy in meaning fails to keep faith with facts about how individuals show deference to the social, especially the experts in their society. By allowing for one’s meaning intentions to be fulfilled in the sorts of cases that I am considering, it will be said that I disregard the ubiquitous fact of deference to the expert’s in one’s society, as soon as one realizes the shortcomings in one’s knowledge and therefore sometimes in one’s speech. Such deference suggests that our meanings are in the first place constituted by what experts think and how they speak and if so, then in these cases the right thing to say is that the protagonist in the example above does not know what his own meanings are, in his pre-deference speech, thereby allowing the source of difficulty for the exceptionless fulfillment of one’s meaning-intentions that I am trying to block. There is no need for the view I am presenting to deny that this medically ignorant protagonist, as he becomes

more knowledgeable, will most likely¹⁵ defer to the experts' linguistic usage and wishes to defer to them. Deference is perfectly compatible with the view. All that deference amounts to on this view is that he will change his linguistic behaviour and adopt theirs. He will start speaking as they do. So understood, deference need *not* ever be seen as evidence for the claim that he came to *know more about what he himself means and thinks*. He always knew what he meant and thought. (This is not to suggest that people can never fail to know what they think. But it is to suggest that they when they fail to know what they think, it is generally for *psychological* reasons -- roughly of the sort Freud studied having to do with repression, self-deception, etc.-- and not because certain Professors of *Philosophy* have devised secularized Platonist theories about the social constitution of reference and meaning).¹⁶ He has only learnt something about what his fellows, especially the experts, think and how they use words and because he wishes to defer to the experts he will now start using words as they do. Of course, people learn more than something about the use of words, they also become more (in this case, medically) knowledgeable about the world (about diseases, etc.) To gain some medical knowledge that one hitherto lacked is one thing. To gain knowledge of *one's own* meanings which one hitherto lacked is another. There is never any reason to say that the former kind of acquisition of knowledge implies that the latter kind of knowledge is acquired. That is because there is never any reason to say that lack of the former kind of knowledge implies the lack of the latter sort of knowledge. When one gains medical knowledge one learns things about the world (of diseases, etc) but one also partly learns how one's fellows, in particular the experts, the doctors, use certain words. That doesn't mean that one has to say that one also learns more about the words one oneself used in the past. (It is

in general quite odd, a violation of common-sense, to think that someone, our protagonist, say, has to gain knowledge of *medicine* in order to gain *self-knowledge*.) If hitherto, in one's ignorance one had used certain words idiosyncratically, one then, on gaining the knowledge, usually defers to others in one's own subsequent use of those words. Deference may therefore be admitted, without providing any reason to deny that our protagonist knew what he said and meant when he said "I have arthritis in my thigh."

All of these points about transparency, meaning, norm, deference, etc., follow as straightforward theoretical implications of meeting the desideratum that we must have a decisive solution to the Frege-style puzzles about identity, where by 'decisive' I mean a solution that arrests these puzzles. I have given this Fregean argument for the transparency of meaning or sense to block *one* alleged source for the (normativity-revealing) possibility of failure to act in accord with the intention to say something with certain truth conditions. It had been claimed that we can fail to act on such an intention if we do not know what the truth conditions of our words are and it is this last claim that the considerations about the Frege puzzle have shown is intolerable for any account of meaning to allow.

But I had also said that that it is not the only supposed source.

If one *has* knowledge of the right truth conditions for one's intended words, can one *still* get the truth conditions of one's spoken words wrong? How might one intend to say something with certain (correct) truth conditions but say something with some other (incorrect) truth conditions or with no truth conditions? This can happen only if one *misspeaks*, if the sounds one produces do not amount to the words one intends to utter --as for instance in slips of the tongue. So, suppose I say, "I am going towndown"

with the intention of saying something that has the truth conditions (something that is true if and only if) I am going downtown. The sounds I make do not, it might be said, amount to words that *in fact* have those truth conditions. (In this particular example, they don't seem to have any truth conditions.) Misspeaking, then, is the second alleged source for failing to live up to our intentions that target truth-conditions and thereby falling afoul of the alleged normativity of meaning.

Is this the best way to analyze such cases of misspeaking --to see them as giving rise to such failures? The issues here are, at bottom, not really different from those already discussed in the cases where the apparent source of the difficulty was an apparent failure to know the meanings of the words one intends to speak. In the present cases, one knows the meanings or truth conditions of the words one intends to speak but not of the words one actually ends up (mis) speaking. But the question is why should the words we actually speak fail to have the truth-conditions we intend them to have, even in these cases of misspeaking?

Once again: is an account of meaning which allows such a failure tolerable? We would only allow it if we were in thrall to accounts of meaning that allow for the possibility of the meanings of our words, the words we speak on given occasions with intentions, to be such that we are not aware of what they mean, at the time we utter them. It is only if it is said that I am not aware of the *meanings* of the words I misspeak that my misspeaking could be seen as a sign that I have uttered something with different truth conditions than the one I intended or, in the particular example I mentioned ("I am going towndown"), something with no truth conditions at all. But why shouldn't misspeakings of this kind get a quite different

theoretical treatment, one in which they have just the truth-conditions I intend for them, in which case I am perfectly aware of what my words mean? On this view, the misspeaking is not a case of *meaning* something one doesn't intend, only one of producing sounds one didn't intend to produce. But those sounds mean just what I intended to mean by the sounds that I *intended* to make (but didn't); so I can't fail to know them. One would have thought this theoretical account keeps better faith with the idea of 'misspeaking' because there is nothing amiss with the meaning at all. The alternative view, which I am opposing and which has it that I ended up meaning something I didn't intend might be capturing something that is better termed 'mismeaning'. But it is misspeaking we want to capture, not mismeaning.

There will be a protest: You unfairly foist on the alternative view an attribution of meaning to the misspoken's utterance that is *his* meaning. But it is not his meaning, it is what the words he utters mean. This move does not help matters at all. The protest, if it is correct, only reveals the true nature of the view I am opposing. It is with such a protest in mind that I had stressed earlier, when expounding Grice, that the contrast between speaker's meaning and sentence meaning does not in any way put into doubt that it is the *speaker* who *takes* a sentence he utters to have a certain *sentence* meaning (that is, *intends* it to have certain truth conditions). The speaker is not left out of the idea of sentence meaning just because sentence meaning has a relative independence from speaker's meaning. By contrast, the opposing view, which prompts this protest, prisms apart what one's words mean, what truth conditions they have, from the meaning or truth conditions one intends them to have. Such a prising apart has disastrous consequences

of a kind that I have already discussed. The reason to see the phenomenon of misspeaking as I am suggesting we should, where the intention to mean something and the meaning of the words one utters are inextricably linked (that is to say, *not* prisable apart), is quite simply that if they were not so linked, Frege style puzzles would get no solution that arrests them. Fregean puzzles are puzzles that can only be solved if there is no gap between the meanings of the words one utters and the intentions with which we utter them and, therefore, no threat to our self-knowledge of their meaning. By creating a gap between the truth conditions or meaning of the words a speaker utters and what the *speaker means* (by way of the truth conditions he *intends* for his words), the alternative understanding of misspeaking threatens to make it possible for us to be unaware of the meanings of the words we utter (even as it allows us to be aware of the meanings we *intend* to utter). What truth conditions or meanings our words have may now turn on factors that one may be entirely unaware of; and we have already seen that if we allow for speakers to lack self-knowledge of the meaning of what they say, we will have no satisfactory solution to the Fregean puzzles about identity, at any rate no decisive solution which *arrests* those puzzles and prevents them from arising one step up.

The important point is that the puzzles arise in a particular conceptual place --at the site of the *meanings* of the words someone utters (“Londres est jolie”/“London is not pretty”, “Hesperus is bright”/Phosphorus is not bright) and they need a solution *at that site*. Thus it is no good to say that a speaker must know what he intends his words to mean, but he needn’t know what his words in fact mean. He needs to know what his words in fact mean, if the puzzle is to get a satisfactory solution *because the puzzle is located in the*

meanings of words, that is, in the sentence meaning. And they won't get this solution if what his words mean are prised apart from what he intends them to mean, because that prising apart is what is responsible for the non-transparency of the meaning or senses of his words that thwarts decisive solutions to the puzzle. Indeed, the problem is worse than that. Quite apart from failing to decisively *solve* the puzzles, if we take the view that prises these two things apart, we will not even understand what makes the Fregean style puzzles *go as deep as they do*, a depth that Kripke understood very well when he saw that a puzzle about identity is a puzzle about *belief*. Again, in order not to distract from the main line of argument, I will spell out some of this depth in Appendix II, where I say more about the detailed relations between the theme of misspeaking and these puzzles. The interested reader should read that appendix directly from where this issue is left here. The point for now remains: the reason to find empty and dry the second source for saying that we might fail to fulfill our meaning intentions is the very same reason for finding the first source fruitless. This protest we are considering reveals the true nature of the mistaken view of misspeaking and it shows how it too falls afoul of the Fregean requirement that meaning cannot fail to be transparent without failing to do what it was introduced by Frege to do, when he raised the puzzles about identity.

There is hereabouts a final diagnostic clarification worth making quickly. There is a very natural (though unreflective) tendency to resist this view of misspeaking that I have promoted because misspeakings, *at least on the surface*, are very similar to metaphors and indirect speech acts in the following respect. In all such phenomena, it *seems* natural to think that something is meant by the speaker and needs to be uncovered by artful

interpretation that gets past the conventional sentence meaning of what is uttered. If so, the interpretation that the speaker will go downtown (of the spoken words “I am going towndown”) gets assimilated to the interpretation that human beings are competitive (of the spoken words “Man is a wolf”) and the interpretation that I better hurry up and get on the train (of the spoken words “The train is about to leave”). In other words, the interpretation that I am going downtown of the misspoken words gets assimilated to the interpretation of *speaker’s* meaning and not sentence meaning. With all this seeming similarity of the three cases, one is landed with the idea that “I am going towndown” does *not* mean (is not true if and only if) the speaker is going downtown --anymore than “Man is a wolf” is true if and only if human beings are competitive”. *If* this is right, then in the case of misspeaking (though not in the case of metaphor and indirect speech acts), the misspoker does not know his own sentence meaning because it is not something about which he had any intention whatever since he has uttered it by accident, it being a slip of the tongue, a misspeaking, after all. So if it is right, we are landed once again with the disastrous consequence I have been discussing --the inability to arrest the Fregean puzzles. It is, however, superficial and misleading to think that misspeakings are similar in this way to metaphors and indirect speech acts.

In the latter phenomena, speaker’s meaning, as I pointed out earlier, comes visibly apart from the sentence meaning. In fact speakers exploit something in the sentence meaning *in order to convey something else* to hearers. They convey that ‘something else’ *by* deploying the sentence meaning of the utterances they make. But in the case of misspeaking, there is only a false impression of speaker’s meaning and sentence meaning being

visibly apart in the same sense. The idea that the speaker says what she in fact merely *happens* to say ('I am going towndown') *in order to* deliberately convey something *quite else*—that she is going downtown—is completely inappropriate in the analysis of misspeaking. The description 'quite else' is entirely out of place as a description of what the speaker is deliberately up to, while it is perfectly correct in describing what the speaker is deliberately up to in metaphors and indirect speech acts. The fact that misspeaking turns on a visible difference between what is uttered and what one is intending to get someone to believe (respectively, "I am going towndown" and 'I am going downtown') should not confuse anyone into thinking that the case is similar to the cases of metaphor and indirect speech acts, which also turn on a visible difference between what is uttered and what one is intending to get someone to believe (respectively "Man is a wolf" and " Human beings are competitive" or "The train is about to leave" and "Walk faster to the train".) In the case of misspeaking (the utterance of "I am going towndown), the speaker has the following two intentions: to say something that is true if and only if the speaker is going downtown and to get across to the hearer the belief that he is going downtown. There is thus *coincidence* --rather than departure-- of what the speaker *intends* to get across with what he intends his words to mean whereas in the case of metaphors and indirect speech acts, there is departure rather than coincidence. Metaphors and indirect speech acts are manifestly pragmatic phenomena because our interest in them as speakers and hearers is not in the deliberately intended sentence meaning of what is uttered but by what *else* is *deliberately* conveyed by their utterance. By contrast, our interest as hearers in misspeaking (as well as the misspeaker's interest) is to get (and get across) the truth-conditions or sentence meaning deliberately intended by the utterance --neither the

misspeaker nor the hearer have any interest in what *else* is *accidentally* conveyed by the uttered sounds.

In sum, then, my claim has been that if we see cases of misspeaking, such as slips of the tongue, as having a literal, sentence meaning, a meaning that is different from what it *sounds* like --a meaning that is imparted by the semantic intentions of the misspeaker-- then we can block misspeaking from becoming a second source for thinking that speakers do not have their own meanings or truth conditions right. And so, just as with the first source discussed earlier, without the possibility of being wrong about our own meanings, we lose our grip on the very idea of a notion of norm that holds of meaning since no one would want to say that talk of normativity is apt when there is no possibility of being wrong or mistaken. More specifically, to put in terms that we began with owing to Wittgenstein: we cannot fail to act in accord with the intention relevant to meaning.

I argued (in Section 2) that that intention is not the intention to apply particular words to particular things rather than others, but the intention to say particular words with particular truth conditions and satisfaction conditions. The subsequent discussion (in the present section) of the phenomenon of misspeaking helps me to stress a point that I have tried to be careful about throughout the paper whenever I have formulated this intention relevant to meaning. The intention relevant to meaning is best formulated by saying that a speaker intends with an (assertoric) utterance to say *something* which has particular truth conditions. The word “something” in this formulation has the right generality. Sometimes speakers do not produce the exact sounds they intend to produce, as when they misspeak. Thus when the intention is described with the right generality, such cases will not spoil the

efficacy of that intention. Our protagonist who utters, “I am going downtown” does indeed intend to say *something* that is true if and only if he is going downtown. That intention, formulated with that *generality*, is perfectly well fulfilled when he misspeaks, even if another intention formulated without that generality (to utter “I am going downtown” *in particular*) is not. And it is the former more generally formulated intention that is his *semantic* intention which targets the *sentence* meaning of his utterance.

What I will concede is that when the intention relevant to meaning gets such a general description as I am proposing (“I intend to say *something* which is true if and only if...”), we may sometimes find that what truth conditions an utterance gets may be rather idiosyncratic, given what he actually utters. A slip of the tongue displays this vividly. If, by a slip of the tongue, I utter “Sara’s writing is eligible” when what I intended to utter was “Sara’s writing is illegible”, then, even though on my view I have intended that I utter *something* that is true if and only if Sara’s writing is illegible and fulfilled that intention quite nicely (and even been understood to have intended that, though perhaps with some initial strain), what I *happened* to utter (“Sara’s writing is eligible”), gets a very idiosyncratic truth-condition. It gets a very idiosyncratic sentence meaning.

Is there any shortcoming to allowing this sort of idiosyncrasy into literal, sentence meaning, and not restricting such idiosyncrasy to non-literal, deliberately creative phenomena like metaphors and other figures of speech? The answer to this is, “yes”. Idiosyncratic *semantic* intentions for one’s words put our hearers to some strain in interpreting the words correctly. Unlike metaphors, which at least in poetry and other creative

writing, are *intended* to strain and surprise the reader (in a pleasurable way), the routine utterances that may be the product of misspeaking, presumably are not so intended. What this means is that even if a speaker cannot fail to act in accord with his semantic intentions, as I am insisting, there may be another intention that a speaker has that he does fail to act in accord with, which is the intention to say something that will be *easily* understood by others, understood without strain or without surprise. One assumes that speakers have such an intention in their ordinary speech most of the time, and misspoken utterances or utterances made in medical (or other forms of) ignorance would be actions that fail to be in accord with such an intention. So I am not denying that various intentions, such as the one to be *easily* understood, are not always fulfilled in the theoretical treatment of meaning I am proposing. But these are not the failures of fulfillment that reflect any *intrinsic* normativity of meaning. “Speak so as to avoid hearers strain in understanding what you have to say” is not an intention towards one’s speech that reflects a norm that is intrinsic to language. It is a purely utilitarian norm.¹⁷ (See below footnote 15 and footnote 18 for more on this point). It is not a norm of the sort that squares with the deep assumption of normativity that philosophers have made so central to meaning. That assumption of normativity is said by those philosophers to be *intrinsic* to meaning rather than merely utilitarian.

I have first argued that if we make such an assumption of intrinsic normativity, then that assumed normativity would have to reside in intentions which, when properly identified, are intentions that target the sentence meaning or truth conditions of one’s words and which, when formulated correctly, have an appropriate generality. But if this paper’s further Fregean

argument is convincing, intentions, so identified and so formulated, cannot and must not fail to get fulfilled in the speech of those who possess them. And if they cannot fail to get fulfilled, they cannot reflect any genuine normativity, which requires the *possibility* at least, of the failure to get fulfilled. In other words, we have a *reductio ad absurdum* of the assumption of normativity.

4. Concluding Remarks

Meaning intentions, then, are exceptions to Wittgenstein's insight about the nature of intention. They are *not refutations* of his insight and it would be a misunderstanding of the argument of this paper to think it was presented with a view to providing a *counter* example to his claim about the normativity built into the very idea of intention. As a generality, it is indeed true that intentions do have the normativity built into them that Wittgenstein first profoundly brought to our notice. The point rather is that intentions regarding meanings are a degenerate species of intentions and the deepest reasons for this, which I cannot explore here in what is already a long paper, have to do with the fact that meaning something is a rather unique kind of thing in that *intending* a meaning and *living up* to that intention are –to put it flamboyantly and perhaps a little perversely --more like one thing rather than two, and so failures are not really possible. This remarkable fact is one that I have pursued only briefly elsewhere and intend to explore at much greater length in the future. The present paper's conclusion is, accordingly, relatively modest. Without fully spelling out this unique nature of meaning intentions, it has given an argument to show why they must be viewed, in a

very specific sense, as degenerate. It is also modest in another sense. It has not argued that meaning is not normative in any interesting sense,¹⁸ though I believe that to be true and have argued it elsewhere.¹⁹ The conclusion is merely skeptical about the normativity of meaning owing to the normativity of intentions. It argues only that meaning is not normative because, despite its intimate link with intention, it does not inherit the normativity that *intentions* possess; and the argument is that the normativity that intentions possess *lapse* when intentions target meanings.

Should it be a cause for concern that normativity of this kind goes missing when it comes to meaning? In the passage of this essay's argument, we have seen the extent to which there would have to be a loss of self-knowledge of meaning in order for meaning to be normative and I have hinted at the extent to which that loss would itself owe to a location of meaning in the social realm or in the objective realm of scientific essences. I described these as the mundane versions of Plato's more metaphysically abstract locations. I reckon, then, that any concern we feel at such an absence of norms reflects a residual, secularized yearning for Platonist forms of objectivity, something that Wittgenstein would have seen as calling for therapy, not philosophical satisfaction.²⁰

Appendix I: Relating Meaning Intentions to Grice's Analysis of Meaning

Grice's *initial* analysis captures what it is that the speaker tries to get across to a hearer in a communicative episode. In doing so, it gives the speaker's meaning on that occasion. The analysis captures speaker's meaning by citing three nested intentions of the speaker. These intentions themselves have as their target an effect on the hearer. Essential to the speaker hitting this target, I have said, is that the words on the speaker's lips have a sentence meaning *as well*. And this kind of meaning needs a *further* analysis. Such analysis is often given by notions such as truth-conditions (or assertibility conditions.....). I have said that the speaker must also have *intentions* regarding this sentence meaning since *he takes* the words he utters to have it. It is not as if the sentence meaning is outside the orbit of his mentality. It is right perhaps to describe all this in terms of instrumentality. One tries to²¹ get something across to someone, get him or her to have a certain belief, *by* uttering something, some words, with a certain sentence meaning. Both (trying to get someone to believe something and saying something with a certain sentence meaning) are therefore intentional acts -- they are done with intentions. No doubt there are other actions involved in such episodes as well, which have further instrumentality: one says something with a certain sentence meaning *by* moving one's throat, etc. This too is an intentional act; it too is done with an intention. Some, perhaps all, of these intentions are highly implicit; they are not in the forefront of the speakers mind. But that does not cast doubt on their being bona fide intentions. It would be quite wrong to think that one's moving one's throat to speak in normal forms of linguistic communication is not an intentional act

and not an act done with an intention merely because of its implicitness, in this sense. And the same holds of the intentional act of saying something with a certain sentence meaning. A good schematic description of the instrumentalities of this speech episode, then, is that our protagonist tries to 1) get someone to believe that there is a snake in front of him *by* 2) uttering words which are true if and only if there is a snake in front of him, which he, in turn, does *by* 3) moving his throat and producing the sounds....Each specifies an intentional act, acts done with intentions.

And it has been my point that it is only right to describe the second and intermediate step here as the one that involves the notion of meaning. It is the notion of meaning as it is lodged in 2) that philosophers have long made great and sophisticated efforts to provide some analysis and theory of. Grice was no exception to this, but his is a particularly interesting case because he *began* his analysis by focusing on the sorts of intentions with which 1) is done. He hoped to *build on this basis* and move further to the eventual analysis of meaning as it is found in 2). He called this latter ‘timeless’ meaning (while I am invoking the more standard vocabulary of ‘sentence meaning’) and it was his eventual goal to give an account of it. Whether he was able to do so *on that basis* is not a question I am going to discuss here at all. But it is easy to be misled by something in Grice. In the initial analysis in terms of the intentions that go into the intentional act 1), he used the term ‘meaning’ (sometimes called by him ‘occasional’ meaning to contrast it with ‘timeless’) in describing what he was analyzing in this initial phase. This may give the impression that when we talk of linguistic meaning, 1) is our focus. But it is not. As I said, the subject of meaning is the subject that resides in 2). It is what philosophers (*including Grice*) interested in meaning

or semantics have made the object of their theoretical efforts when they study those aspects of language that are not purely syntactic nor purely pragmatic.²²

That Grice himself was clear about this is obvious from the fact that in subsequent years he provided a detailed supplementary account²³ of certain elements found in 1) by introducing a notion of conversational implicature, and explicitly viewed that as being in the domain of pragmatics, not semantics. The details of that account are not essential here since what I want to really stress is that the supplement is a supplement to Grice's analysis of the phenomenon in 1) and once one notices that something like conversational implicature is relevant to this phenomenon, it becomes explicit that it is to be distinguished from meaning, even for Grice. The idea is that getting something across to someone by telling them things, getting them to form certain beliefs and so on, *can* be (even if it often is not) achieved by means that may be quite at odds with sentence meanings -- as the case of metaphors obviously makes clear. That someone should get someone to believe that human beings are competitive (by saying something manifestly false, i.e., saying words that are true if and only if men are wolves which, they manifestly are not) falls squarely within the domain of 1) above. What Grice does in his work on pragmatics and conversational implicature is to give principles by which one may identify departure of speaker's meaning from meaning (sentence meaning), principles such as "Don't state things that are obvious falsehoods". Violations of such principles are the signs that something like metaphor, for instance, is in play. A speaker intends (in the sense of 1)) to get someone to believe that human beings are competitive by asserting an obvious (zoological) falsehood, thus getting the hearer alerted to the fact that some interesting departure from the sentence meaning must be in

play. Thus the theory of conversational implicature or pragmatics is concerned primarily with the initial three fold intentional analysis in 1), making clear that 1) is not the site of semantics or meaning, even though Grice (*in effect* misleadingly, we can say in hindsight) used the term ‘meaning’ to describe what was being analyzed in 1). Meaning is located in 2) and since Grice (invoking Frege, sometimes using Tarski-style axiomatizations of the insight in Frege) it has come to be explicitly understood in terms of truth-conditions (or assertibility conditions or...). As a result, in the case of metaphors it is very clear that when the world is *manifestly* uncooperative, when the truth conditions have *very obviously* not obtained, then a principle of conversational implicature (Don’t speak obvious falsehoods) has been violated. This alerts the hearer to the fact that the speaker (not likely to be making such an obvious mistake or uttering such a blatant and easily discoverable falsehood) intends (in the sense of 1)) something that departs dramatically from what is identified as the meaning or the truth conditions of the words, intends to get across that human beings, far from actually being wolves, are instead merely competitive. And the crucial point remains that the fact that there is often *no* departure (dramatic or otherwise) from 2) in the beliefs that one conveys with one’s intentions (in the sense of 1) should not confuse us into thinking that 1) is where semantics or meaning and not pragmatics is in play.

I’ve spent some time on Grice partly because he was the first philosopher since Wittgenstein to study with some systematic care the relations between intentions and linguistic meaning, which is my particular way of approaching the subject of this paper --the question of the normativity of meaning—but partly also to diagnose why philosophers in their claims for

the normativity of meaning have misidentified the intentions relevant to linguistic meaning, in the way I mentioned earlier in the main body of the text. If my diagnosis is right, one can, if one is not careful enough, be misled by Grice's use of the term 'meaning' to describe the phenomenon in 1), to think that it is there rather than in 2) where the intention-based analysis of meaning is to be *entirely* located. This would account for why one might conclude that someone's use of the words "That is a snake", mistaking a rope for a snake, amounts to a mistake about meaning. How exactly would it account for it?

If one thought that the intention relevant to meaning is that one says something with the intention of conveying something to a hearer or, as Grice puts it in 1), with the intention of getting the hearer to believe something, then perhaps we *would* be able to establish the normativity of meaning along the lines that philosophers have assumed. If someone said "That is a snake" with the intention to get a hearer to believe that there is a snake in front of him, then pointing to a rope rather than a snake might well produce the requisite sort of error in the matter of meaning. One must point to a snake in order to fulfill that particular intention because if the hearer notices that it is a rope, he will not come to believe that that is a snake. Perhaps the idea is better put when it is elaborated more explicitly as follows. If one intends to get someone to believe something which one takes to be true, viz., that there is a snake in front of one, then one way in which one might do it is to *further* intend, in one's literal and sincere assertoric utterance of "That is a snake", to apply those words to a snake in front of one. If there is no snake there, one has *misapplied* the terms, one has *failed* to act in accord with that *further*

intention, and so, in turn, quite possibly may fail to fulfill the original intention of producing a certain effect in the hearer.

Notice that I am being careful to say, “quite possibly may” because the hearer, as I said, has to notice that I am perceptually wrong in order to fail to come to have the belief that there is a snake there. Remember Grice’s initial analysis is an analysis appealing to the phenomenon of intending to have *effects on hearers*, getting them to have beliefs, and so on. So the hearer would have to fail to acquire the belief that there is a snake there for the intentions, which provide the analysis, to be unfulfilled. It is not therefore *sufficient* for that Gricean intention to be unfulfilled that I say, “That is a snake” when there is a rope present. The hearer, if he is not alert, may not notice that I am wrong and come to believe that there is a snake there, on hearing my words. In that case the Gricean intention would be fulfilled. The only intention that immediately fails to get fulfilled in the presence of a rope is what I referred to as the ‘further’ intention that is tied to what one is applying one’s words to. This is the intention that is claimed by many to be directly and immediately tied to the normativity of meaning, when that normativity is viewed in terms of correct and incorrect application of words.

Even so, the important point, if my diagnosis is right, is that this last sort of intention (what I called the ‘further’ intention) is squarely in the region of the intentions to convey things to hearers, the phenomenon that Grice analyzes in his *initial* analysis. It is not at all in the region of the semantic intentions of saying things with certain truth or satisfaction conditions, which analyze the quite different phenomenon of ‘timeless’ or sentence meaning that he wants his analysis to *eventually work up to*. The ‘further’ intention is caught up in the former region of intentions because it is

directly a part of one's project of conveying things to people; it is directly in the service of getting people to believe things, etc. It is not to be collapsed with or even really deeply associated with sentence meaning and with the latter region of intentions --to say things with certain truth-conditions. And my point is that once we a) see this and b) see no *direct* relevance to meaning of *any* intention in the former region, then whatever else may reveal the possibility of failures to fulfill the intentions relevant to meaning (intentions in the latter region), it won't be such things as mistaking ropes for snakes and, more generally, misapplying one's terms.

Appendix II: Getting Disquotation Right So As To See Why The Puzzles About Identity Go So Deep

The puzzles about identity to be found in Frege and Kripke raise some of the most wide-ranging and deep issues in philosophy because they are puzzles that show that it is not really possible to do the Philosophy of Language fruitfully without bringing onto centre-stage the Philosophy of Mind. On the view of misspeaking that I was inveighing against in the main body of the text above, the words we utter are *not* inextricably linked to our mentality (as I was suggesting they are). Rather they are prised apart from our mentality. This diminishes the significance of the puzzle as I see them -- and is plain for anyone to see. What is plain to see is that the puzzles are not just raising points about meaning and reference, they are puzzles that reach down to (because they threaten) our most elementary assumptions about the nature of the *rationality* of speakers of a language (as is evident in the fact that I have been stressing, viz. that if they are not decisively addressed and arrested, we will not be able to make a distinction between lack of empirical

knowledge and failure of logic or reasoning.) And rationality is a property of a speaker's *mind*. So the links between language (or meaning) and mind have to be closer than the view I am opposing permits, to *so much as raise* the puzzles about identity in their full depth and significance.

Kripke himself, despite the fact that he is no friend of Frege's solution (that appeals to *senses*) to the puzzles about identity, nevertheless sees this importance for the puzzle of this inextricability of the link between meaning and mind. Whatever one may think of his skepticism about 'senses' and of his own way of addressing the puzzle, his understanding of how the puzzle arises and how deep it goes, is insightful and instructive. It is precisely because he takes meaning and belief/intention/... (the intentional aspects of the mind, generally) to be inextricably linked, that his puzzle ends up being a 'puzzle about *belief*', as his very title makes clear, and therefore about the rationality of his protagonist, Pierre.

Having said that, it also must be said that there are complications in the *specific way* he elaborates the link between meaning and belief that are of special interest when it comes to misspeaking and they ought to be discussed and clarified because they are highly instructive. The link is elaborated by Kripke in what he calls the principle of disquotation. That principle makes the link by saying that whenever a linguistic agent sincerely utters or assents to a sentence (say, "London is not pretty") one may remove the quotation marks and place the sentence in a that-clause specifying the content of the agent's belief (...believes that London is not pretty). This principle, along with two other things --something he calls a 'principle of translation' (which essentially asserts that translation preserves truth-conditions) and Kripke's own causal, anti-Fregean account of reference-- together give rise to his

version of the Fregean puzzle. (The principle of translation is only needed for Kripke's own version of the puzzle because it has two languages, French and English.) Suppose, then, that Pierre, brought up in Paris and influenced by his Anglophile nanny, asserts sincerely "Londres est jolie", and then moves to London, without knowing that Londres *is* London, and lives in some shabby locality and asserts sincerely in his newly acquired language, English, "London is not pretty". With all this supposed, an adherence to the combination of the three things I mentioned (the two principles --of disquotation and of translation-- and an anti-Fregean, Kripkean causal account of reference), give rise to the puzzle. We have an agent, who is merely uninformed of the identity of London and Londres, *believing* two inconsistent things -- believing that London is pretty and believing that London is not pretty. In that combination of three things, Fregeans would readily adhere to the two principles²⁴ but will reject the causal doctrine about reference, introducing instead the notion of senses (disallowed by that doctrine) to block this unacceptable implication of Pierre's irrationality. Kripke finds this an unsatisfactory solution to the puzzle, partly because of his prejudices about the notion of sense, some of which quite possibly flow from a failure to understand that senses are in a very deep way not at all like planets and cities --one cannot have multiple perspectives on them, and so they *have* to be the sorts of thing that are self-known to speakers, and therefore they cannot be the subject and occasion of further puzzles one step up. But here I don't want to focus on the dispute between Kripke and the Fregeans. I want to just focus on the principle of disquotation since that is Kripke's particular elaboration of the general idea that meaning and mentality are inextricably linked, the very idea that is essential to my claims about what goes on in misspeaking.

The trouble with this particular elaboration of the general idea is that, at least on the surface, it seems to actually *spoil* rather than elaborate the inextricability *when it comes to the case of misspeaking*. When someone says, “I am going towndown”, a specific understanding in terms of disquotation of the general idea of the inextricable link would seem to have it that he believes that he is going *towndown*. And that is not a very clear and perspicuous attribution of belief. By contrast, in my gloss on misspeaking, I have the agent believing that he is going *downtown* (a perfectly clear and perspicuous attribution) because I also have his utterance “I am going towndown” *mean* that he is going downtown. And it is possible to have it mean that because one takes the speaker to intend that his words are true if and only if he is going downtown, and one takes the meanings of his words to be fixed by that semantic intention of his and not by some other factors, often adduced by philosophers, such as social linguistic practice²⁵ (or the scientific essence of substances, diseases, etc.) that may in some cases not even be known to the speaker. It is these close links between his meaning and his mentality (i.e., his semantic *intention* and *therefore* also his *belief*), which allow me to make the clear and perspicuous attribution of belief to the speaker. In fact, there is a close circle of links between two mental and one linguistic phenomena: a speaker believes that he is going downtown, he intends the words he utters (“I am going towndown”, as it happens) to be true if and only if he is going downtown, and the words he utters are indeed true if and only (they indeed mean that) he is going downtown. So, it looks as if something goes amiss when one elaborates the close links in terms of the principle of disquotation. What the links should attribute in a perfectly clear attribution of a belief, as I have it, gets mangled into a bizarre attribution of

the belief that he is going to town down, when the links are seen in strictly disquotational terms.

The fault line here is the *strictly* disquotational elaboration of the close links between meaning and mind

Let me raise the issues first not with the case of misspeaking, which is some distance away from the puzzles about identity, but with a case much closer to the kind of examples discussed in the puzzle by Frege and Kripke. There is a version of the puzzle that Kripke mentions briefly, where the two names uttered in the two seemingly inconsistent sentences generated by the puzzle are not merely in the same language as they are in Frege's original version of the puzzle (unlike in the puzzle about Pierre) but are indeed, on the surface, the *same name*, "Paderewski". There is in fact only one person called "Paderewski", but the protagonist doesn't know that and thinks that there are two different persons, one a statesman, the other a famous musician. Thus the apparent inconsistency seems to be starker, with the protagonist saying, not merely, "Hesperus is bright" and "Phosphorus is not bright", but, let's say, "Paderewski is musically accomplished" and "Paderewski is not musically accomplished". Here, elaborating the close link between meaning and mentality in terms of a strict version of the principle of disquotation will land us in a midden. If, as I have been insisting, it is one's semantic intentions that impart meaning's on one's words and one's semantic intentions are to be thought of as having close links with one's beliefs as mentioned in the previous paragraph, and the belief itself is identified via a *disquotational* strategy that links it with the utterance, one will have to say that the speaker semantically intends his first utterance to be true if and only if Paderewski is musically accomplished and the second utterance to be true

if and only if Paderewski is not musically accomplished. If that happens, senses or meanings, *even if they are imparted by our semantic intentions*, do not seem to have solved the puzzle at all.

What is obviously needed here to make disquotation line up with the spirit and the underlying point of the close links it elaborates between meaning and mind, is to allow that disquotation comes into play *after* we make clear what the carriers of the semantics really are. In this example, the term “Paderewski” in each sentence contains an unpronounced (and unwritten) subscript. The sounds and inscriptions as they originally stand are incomplete and they don’t properly reveal the *words* that comprise the full and proper semantic items. The semantics (the senses) are carried by neologisms that we will therefore have to introduce, “Paderewski₁” and “Paderewski₂”. The sounds and inscriptions misleadingly leave the subscripts out. Once we neologize, disquotation can proceed apace. Now, the semantic intentions with which the speaker utters the two sentences can be formulated in a way that allows the meanings or senses to remove the puzzle. Of course, this solution to the puzzle is not Kripke’s solution, as I have already said. It is Fregean. It appeals to senses, given in two different semantic intentions, which intend for each of the two (only seemingly inconsistent) sentences, two different truth conditions. So also, in the case of misspeaking, disquotation should proceed *after* we make clear that ‘towndown’ is really a mispronunciation of ‘downtown’, just as each utterance of “Paderewski” in the two sentences of that version of the puzzle about identity is a mispronunciation of “Paderewski₁” and “Paderewski₂” respectively.²⁶ Once this is done, we are landed with no unclear and

unintelligible attributions of belief to the person who misspeaks and says “I am going to town down”.

Someone may wish to enter a quarrel here, claiming that this is to abandon the disquotation principle, not rescue it from a strictly rigid reading. But this dispute is paltering and terminological. Whether we say the theoretical move here is ‘disquotational’ or not, hardly matters. What matters is to register that the move fastens on an insight *in Kripke* that the puzzle about identity is a puzzle that reaches all the way down to issues of belief, mind, and rationality, and builds from that insight a notion of sense based on an individual speaker’s semantic intentions to characterize the meanings of the words in his speech. Kripke insight that the puzzle goes that deep is just the insight that meaning and mind have inextricably close links, but he then does not see *in those close links* the possibility of developing this individualist Fregean²⁷ notion of sense that would decisively resolve the puzzle. And I am claiming that this combination of insight and failure on his part is revealingly present in his own principle of disquotation. The principle itself is an acknowledgement of the close links and is of a piece with (in fact it makes for) the insight that the puzzle reaches all the way down to issues of rationality. The failure to give the principle the less strict and more relaxed reading is of a piece with the failure to build on the insight about those links and provide a plausible version of the Fregean solution. If one sees disquotation in a less strict way than it seems on the surface to be, one has all the ingredients for a convincing Fregean solution to the puzzles, one that would arrest them once and for all.

Akeel Bilgrami

Footnotes

¹ For Wright, see the papers gathered in his [Rails to Infinity](#) (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001). For Kripke, see [Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language: An Elementary Exposition](#) (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, Reprint Edition 2007). For Wittgenstein himself, see [Philosophical Investigations](#) (Prentice Hall, 3rd Edition, 1999).

² One preliminary terminological clarification. By ‘linguistic meaning’, I mean what we would normally think of as lexical meaning, the meanings of words and meanings of the sentences which they form --so primarily the meanings that are specified in the axioms that are formulated in the base clauses of meaning-theories and the theorems that they yield. (The paper explicitly discusses truth-conditional accounts of meaning a little later and relates them to linguistic intentions.) It is the normativity of ‘meaning’, in this sense of the term, that I will be giving an argument against. I am not denying that intentional states such as beliefs (and desires) are normative and have in fact argued in a recent work --see my [Self-Knowledge and Resentment](#) (Harvard University Press: 2006)-- that they are more strenuously and explicitly normative than has often been thought by those (Davidson, for instance) who take them to be normative in some sense. And I am certainly not denying that there are logical norms, including those of decision theory. It is, of course, a complicated question how meaning can be so closely related, as it is, to belief and (desire), and indeed therefore to logical norms of one kind or another that constitute these states, without

itself being normative. I will not be able to address that question in this brief paper. These points, though there may be obvious, need to be stressed because the considerations regarding rule-following that seem to assume that meaning is normative --an assumption I am trying to put into doubt in this paper—also of course assume that intentionality, reasoning and logic is normative and so it is worth just being clear that these claims need to be kept separate, such that one can affirm normativity in one place and be skeptical of it in another.

³ H.P. Grice, “Meaning”, The Philosophical Review 66, 1957.

⁴ See for instance, "Utterer's Meaning and Intention," The Philosophical Review 78: 147-77.

⁵ In subsequent commentary on Grice as a result of a point made in a seminal article by P. F. Strawson in his “Intention and Convention in Speech Acts”, Logico-Linguistic Papers (London: Methuen 1971), further intentions began to be added to Grice’s analysis to patch up what were seen as counter-examples. See particularly, Stephen Schiffer’s book Meaning (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972) is a thorough and careful elaboration of the Gricean project on meaning and takes Strawson’s patching-up operation towards what seems like a definitive conclusion.

⁶ Jonathan Bennett, “The Meaning-Nominalist Strategy”, Foundations of Language, 1973.

⁷ David Lewis, Convention: A Philosophical Study (Oxford University Press. 1969)

⁸ *ibid.*, chapter 6

⁹ For example this idea of normativity via misapplication is represented as the standard view on the matter in an article intended as a survey of the recent literature on the subject of rule-following in P.A. Boghossian “The Rule Following Considerations, Mind, XCVIII, 1989.

¹⁰ I had developed this point at length in a paper written quite some years ago entitled “Norm and Meaning” in Ralph Stoecker (ed.) Reflecting Davidson (De Gruyter 1993)

¹¹ The example is from Tyler Burge, “Individualism and the Mental”, *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 6, eds. P. French, T. Uehling, H. Wettstein (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1978). Burge’s is a highly fortified and carefully presented and interesting version of a position that was first argued by Michael Dummett in his “The Social Character of Language” reprinted in his Truth and Other Enigmas (Cambridge, Mass: Truth and Other Enigmas, 1978). The position stresses the social constitution of an individual’s meanings and therefore of his thoughts. It is the position that I passingly refer to in this paper as a ‘secularized’ version of Platonistic ideals of meaning. My own opposition to this position is much influenced by Donald Davidson’s later views on meaning, though the considerations presented here via the Fregean puzzle about identity are intended to provide an argument for this opposition, an argument that is not found in Davidson, partly at least because he too was highly suspicious of Fregean notions of sense for reasons that are very similar to the ones I partially attribute to Kripke in the text. I also believe --as I argue both in Belief and Meaning (Oxford:

Blackwell, 1992) and more decisively in “Can Truth be a Goal of Inquiry?” in R. Brandom (ed.) Rorty and his Critics (Malden: Blackwell, 2000)—that Davidson’s views on the nature of truth are quite incompatible with those aspects of his thinking that have influenced me and it is a real question whether Davidson really understood the implications of some of his later views on meaning.

¹² If one were to replace truth conditions with assertibility conditions in this sentence, that would not spoil the Fregean provenance that I am stressing. After all Michael Dummett precisely was elaborating Fregean sense in his many works, when he argued that we ought to replace a theory of meaning in terms of truth conditions with a theory of meaning in terms of assertibility conditions. See “What is a Theory of Meaning II” in Gareth Evans and John McDowell, Meaning and Truth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976). For Frege himself, see Die Grundlagen der Arithmetik, 1884, Translated by J. L. Austin as The Foundations of Arithmetic. (Oxford. Basil Blackwell) and “On Sense and Reference” in Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege, trans. and ed. P. Geach and M. Black (Oxford: Blackwell, 1952).

¹³ I have said Frege himself leaves inexplicit this way of raising the puzzle because he tends to raise it via considerations of cognitive content rather than rationality, but it is obvious to the reader that issues of rationality are not far from the surface. It is Kripke who makes things more explicit when he raises the puzzle as a puzzle about belief and not merely about identity and reference. See Saul Kripke, “A Puzzle about Belief” in Edna Margalit (ed.) Meaning and Use (Dordrecht: D. Reidl, 1976)

¹⁴ Benson Mates, ‘Synonymity’ in L. Linsky, ed., *Semantics and the Philosophy of Language*. (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1952). Mates, in allowing this kind of wondering or doubt, clearly takes senses to be the sort of thing that one can get confused about in the way I am denying. He was an early figure in shaping a view of senses that is very different from what I say about them in the next paragraph.

¹⁵ I say ‘most likely’ quite deliberately. There can be contexts in which someone may not change his use of words if he thought that people around him had become used to his idiosyncratic usage and that it would now put them to strain if he changed his usage. If this happens, it is proof that convenience and utilitarian considerations of that kind are more important in governing usage than norms of meaning are. That is to say, we *defer* in order to be understood without strain by others, and in unusual contexts of the sort I have just mentioned, we may also *not* defer if convenience and utility dictates that one shouldn’t. The common element to two opposing responses (both deference and non-deference), then, is utility. If so, deference does not support the idea of normativity, except in the low class sense of utility. Certainly not in any constitutive or intrinsic sense of normativity. I say something more about this at the very end of the paper and in footnote 18 below.

¹⁶ What I say in the parenthesis should make it clear that it would be a crude and elementary misreading of my insistence that theories of reference and meaning should not allow one to say that one might not know the truth conditions of one’s words (and therefore the contents of one’s thoughts) to

say that it is a *Cartesian* position of infallibility. See C. Travis, “Order out of Messes”, *Mind* vol. 104, 1995 for an example of such a crude and elementary misunderstanding. Nothing in my insistence denies that there might be the most ordinary forms of self-deception or the more elaborate forms of repressions and self-censor mechanisms that Freud studied which thwart self-knowledge of our states of mind. I say more about this subject in my book Self-Knowledge and Resentment (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2006) but before that too in “A Trilemma for Redeployment” Philosophical Issues 13.1 (2003) and “Why Holism is Harmless and Necessary” in Nous, Volume 32, Supplement 12, 1998. In the latter article, there is also much discussion of the issues in this paper, in particular on the question of whether Fodor’s efforts to deal with the puzzle about identity can escape some of the issues presented in this paper.

¹⁷ In my Belief and Meaning (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), chapter 3, I allow for utilitarian and non -constitutive norms of meaning and discuss at some length the difference between them and the sort of normative element one finds pervasively assumed in the literature.

¹⁸ By interesting I mean in some intrinsic and categorical sense normative, as opposed to merely utilitarian norms. The norm or imperative “Do x if you want to be easily understood” does not have the same *philosophical* interest (though it may have a lot of practical interest) as “Do x if you want to be understood”. Because ‘being understood’ (as opposed to being understood easily) has internal dialectical links with meaning itself, the norm is more intrinsic and categorical, rather than conditional. The fact is that when one

says “I am going to town” and “I have arthritis in my thigh” there is no problem of one’s individualistically conceived meanings being understood. Clearly, the idea that meanings are to be thought of individualistically should not be confused with the idea that they are private and therefore unavailable for others to understand. They are perfectly public phenomena. They merely put the hearer to strain in trying to understand one and therefore violate the utilitarian norm about being understood *easily*.

¹⁹ See chapter 3 of my Belief and Meaning (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992)

²⁰ Philosophers devoted to the mature philosophy of Wittgenstein may, however, be made anxious by other aspects of this paper’s claims and arguments. First, I have assumed with many other philosophers that there is a basic distinction between sentence meaning and speakers’ meaning, and devotees of the mature Wittgenstein have often said that he never did subscribe to the idea of sentence meaning, leave alone to a truth-conditional theory or an assertibility conditional theory or indeed any other kind of theory of sentence meaning. I must confess to finding this implausible as a reading of Wittgenstein. I have argued in my book Belief and Meaning (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992) for a view of meaning that denies that there can be a theory of meaning understood in terms of certain notions of truth-condition that rely on standard notions of reference, and I think, in doing so, I have presented a view of meaning quite congenial to Wittgenstein, but which makes no concessions to the implausible idea that there should be no distinction between sentence meaning and speakers’ meaning. In fact, I would have thought that Wittgenstein’s well-known remarks hinting at a

‘redundancy’ conception of truth and its relation to language and meaning would suggest an almost explicit (to the extent that anything of this sort could be explicit in Wittgenstein) commitment to sentence meaning. For an interesting discussion of these matters, see Dummett’s “Frege and Wittgenstein”, Perspectives on the Philosophy of Wittgenstein, ed. Irving Block (Oxford: Blackwell 1981), in which he explicitly argues against those who think Wittgenstein denied the very idea of what I have been calling ‘sentence meaning’. In general, not merely in that work but in works too numerous to be cited, Dummett’s understanding of Wittgenstein exploits some of his ideas to construct an argument for an assertibility rather than a truth-conditional conception of *sentence* meaning, that he describes in terms of ‘sense’ which stands in contrast to the quite different phenomenon of ‘force’, something that, though it is not to be confused with speakers’ meaning, stands like speakers’ meaning in contrast with sentence meaning, which falls on the side of the phenomenon of ‘sense’. In this respect, Dummett has spent a philosophical lifetime trying to marry Wittgenstein and Frege, informing each of these philosopher’s positions with the other’s in an attractive mutual elaboration of each. One does not have to agree with the details of Dummett’s verificationist tendencies regarding meaning, which he often tries to draw from passages in Wittgenstein to see the attractiveness of this general strategy of interpretation of these two philosophers in mutually influential ways. A second aspect of my paper and argument that would make scholars of Wittgenstein anxious is my manner of introducing neologisms to deal with cases of misspeaking as well as with cases that are formulated by Frege and Kripke and Burge in their various puzzles and philosophical thought experiments. Neologisms, it might be said, are willful

intrusions into ordinary language made with theoretical purposes in mind. Is this not anathema to the mature Wittgenstein? Since such devotion as I have to the remarkable philosophical insights in Wittgenstein does not drive me to make every last conviction of my own line up with every detail of his views, I am not myself made anxious at the thought that it would be anathema. Even so, it is a real question as to how much these neologisms do fail to line up with his views. If someone says “I am going towndown” and I refuse to take his words at face value and interpret him as saying that he is going downtown instead, it is to put aside what he has uttered in order to capture what he has thought and intended to express. Is that a remote theoretical intrusion or something that common sense demands? And the same common sense aspiration —putting aside what is uttered to capture what the speaker thinks and wishes to express with the words he utters— is in play when one interprets a medically ignorant person’s utterance of “I have arthritis in my thigh” along the lines I mention above in my discussion of that case. In all these cases, one is not imposing some theoretical reformulation on the speaker’s thoughts as they are expressed in his words, as for instance is found in efforts to provide the logical form of a person’s utterances, something often considered to be anathema by some devotees of Wittgenstein. I share no such distaste for those efforts. But I am registering a difference between what I have suggested in the cases I am concerned with and those efforts. In my cases, as I present them, one is merely saying what a speakers thoughts are and one is insisting that what his words are taken to mean must keep faith with what his thoughts are rather than keep faith with what I have called a secular and mundane version of Plato’s ulterior, objectivist, normative ideals for meaning. By contrast, when one

reformulates someone's utterances into logical form, one is suggesting that his *thoughts* have a deeper structure than they have as they surface in his speech; that is a more theoretically motivated enterprise than anything I have suggested and defended in my discussion of my cases.

²¹ I say 'tries to' to stress that success or uptake on the part of the hearer is not required here.

²² Chomsky in a different categorization sees no point to this three-fold characterization for reasons that are not relevant here. For a sympathetic report on what motivates Chomsky, see my "Chomsky, the Philosopher" in Mind and Language 17.3, 2002.

²³ H.P. Grice, "Logic and Conversation", Syntax and Semantics, Vol. 3, 'Speech Acts', eds., Peter Cole and Jerry L. Morgan. New York: Academic Press 1975, 41–58.

²⁴ Though see the next few paragraphs for a serious qualification added to the principle of disquotation, as sensible Fregeans would understand it.

²⁵ None of this implies that social linguistic practice is not a necessary and crucially enabling condition in the background for one to be able to have the kind of individualistic semantic intentions that fix the meanings of one's words. Individualism about meaning does not have to implausibly deny all role to the social embedding of individual speech in the background. It merely denies its place in the foreground, determining an individual's

meaning in terms of what experts in a society think, i.e., the secular (mundane) version of the platonic idea I mentioned earlier.

²⁶ With all this spelt out, we are in a position now to go back and say that neologisms are also relevant to the discussion of the first source of difficulties we were considering earlier in the paper, in the example of the medically ignorant protagonist. There we said that such a speaker intended his utterance “I have arthritis in my thigh” as being true if and only if the speaker, had a disease of the joints *or ligaments* in his thigh. We know, however, that arthritis is a disease of the joints only. So, in my treatment of that example, I was presupposing that the term ‘arthritis’ on his lips was a mispronunciation of, say (neologizing here), ‘tharthritis’. Once we neologize in this way, there too we can proceed apace with disquotation instead of describing the intended truth conditions as “...if and only if the speaker has a disease of the joints or ligaments in my thigh” as I did at that point in my paper, when the apparatus of neologizing had not been introduced. We can now simply say the intended truth conditions are to be described as “...if and only if the speaker has tharthritis in this thigh”. The operative slogan is: “fix the left hand side by neologizing and then disquote on the right”. In my discussion of this case above, I had said the only mistake the medically ignorant man had made was that he didn’t speak like others did. He used the term ‘arthritis’ in a way they didn’t, to mean something they didn’t. But now we have the apparatus to say that his term ‘arthritis’ was just a mispronunciation of ‘tharthritis’, so it wasn’t even as if he was using the word differently, but rather merely mispronouncing, as it were. I don’t deny that this amounts to gerrymandering the terrain of usage

here. Which is the right gerrymandering will be forced on us by the *philosophical issues* at stake (issues such as needing decisive solutions to the Frege puzzles and so on) since the *data* of usage itself leaves it underdetermined which way we should gerrymander. The data (including data about deference, as I have discussed it) doesn't determine whether we should say 1) that he fails to know what his own meanings and thoughts are or instead 2) he knows what his own thoughts and meanings are but merely doesn't know what his fellows meanings and thoughts are. And I am saying that which of these two things we should say about him depends on which better squares with the philosophical issues, in particular the issues about solving something like Frege's puzzles in a way that preserves basic distinctions between rationality and empirical error. My claim has been that these philosophical issues decide in favour of 2). For more on this sort of example and the philosophical questions they raise, see the exchange between Brian Loar and me in Robert Grimm and Daniel Merrill, (ed.), Contents of Thought (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1985). I respond to some of the points Loar makes in his "Reply to Bilgrami" there in Chapters 3 of my Belief and Meaning (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992). The fact that neologisms are involved in responding to both sorts of cases shows that the issues in the two sources of difficulty that I am discussing are very similar. In the first source, one neologizes to keep track of the idiosyncratic meanings and concepts of a medically ignorant person. In the second source one neologizes to keep track of the concepts of a misspeaking person. In each case one does it to ensure that there is no failure to know what a speaker means.

²⁷ Of course, not all Fregeans are individualist in their conception of sense in the way that I have been. And it is doubtful that Frege himself should be counted as such. Though in my co-authored essay with Robert May, tentatively entitled “Frege and Chomsky on Senses and Perspectives”, we excavate elements in Frege’s texts, which suggest an individualist reading of senses of the sort being presented here. See also Akeel Bilgrami and Carol Rovane, “Mind, Language and the Limits of Inquiry” in Cambridge Companion to Chomsky (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2005).