Formal Truth and Objective Reference in an Inferentialist Setting

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

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

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

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

A standard example of this approach is axiomatic set theory. Allegedly, it implicitly defines the concept and realm of 'pure' sets, and, by the same token, *the whole ontology of purely mathematical objects*. It does this on the ground of first order predicate calculus as a system

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

of rules for logical deductions. A system of axioms ‘defines’ the ‘realm of sets’ – together with the element relation between sets – ‘implicitly’, namely by fixing (some) formal inferences between (logically atomic and complex) sentences of the corresponding formal language.

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

“N(S) ist true if and only if S”.

The usual example for this biconditional is:

“‘Snow is white’ is true if and only if snow is white”.

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

“The formula S(x,y...) is satisfied by an infinite sequence of objects”.

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

Usually, the adherents of implicit definitions in Hilbert-style axiomatic theories view the older, Fregean, approach to *truth-conditional semantics* as too close to a Platonist correspondence theory of truth and reference. This diagnosis leads to the formalist (i.e. syntacticist and axiomaticist) revisions in Hilbert's and Carnap's approach as sketched above. But, as we shall see, it is erroneous, even though some of Frege's (1879) remarks might be misleading and his idea of truth conditional *logicism* fails in view of Russell's paradox. Whereas Frege reflected only on the logical constitution of mathematical objects and truths, the early Wittgenstein already has turned to 'pragmatic' considerations of the peculiar *use* we make of sentence that are formally declared as 'true' and to the mediating function of 'logically elementary' sentences for the 'projection' of 'logically complex' sentences to 'the world', namely via a kind of conceptually pre-formed perception or intuition,[2] as I shall try to show below. The early Wittgenstein develops a 'transcendental' analysis of the very possibility of representing objective 'states of affairs' by symbolic or linguistic forms – on the ground of his early insight that *representing is a social practice*. This pragmatic turn of semantics leads, later, to behaviorist, conventionalist, intentionalist, cognitivist, social and normative theories, from Carnap to Quine, Sellars, Davidson, and, finally, to Brandom. All these approaches can or even should be classified despite their differences in details as belonging to one and the same movement, held together by the *joint idea of inferential semantics and pragmatics*. One of the leading question in the following reconstruction of this development is, therefore: What are the reasons for the differences in this joint movement? Are they essential or mere differences of presentation? Which of the controversial claims are results of mutual misunderstandings, which are due to dogmatic positions, which answer to real problems? The basic question is, however, this: How can we transfer the ideas and arguments that are developed for an analysis of the constitution of mathematics, its abstract entities and formal truths, to languages in which we *talk about objective things* in the real world and in which we *do things* in joint communication and cooperative actions?

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

## 2. From mathematical sentences to empirical statements

### 2.1 Content, sense, and reference

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

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

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

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

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

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

entity which is *metaphysically presupposed to exist*, but by the following Leibniz-rule for possible names or terms:

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

The Leibniz-rule just says that the system of (extensional) contexts does not lead, on the level of names or singular terms, to finer distinctions than the corresponding equality "=". A context or predicate C(x) is called "extensional" if it belongs to a system of contexts such that for the corresponding equality "=" the Leibniz-rule holds. Hence, to say that t*=t holds is just the same as to say that both, t and t*, refer to the same object. It just depends on our perspective of reflection if we want to talk about the 'relation of equality' or if we want to talk about the 'identity of objects referred to'. In the first case, we focus on 'meta-level relations' between terms. But when we focus on the realm of 'objects' we talk 'about', we say that an equality of the form t=t* says that t and t* refer to the same or identical 'entity' or 'object'.[7] When speaking of equality or sameness there always is an implicit reference to the relevant extensional contexts C(x). That is, t=t* suffices to infer C(t) from C(t*) and C(t*) from C(t). This means, in turn, that C(x) belongs to *the* distinguished class of contexts *with respect to* "=". This class of contexts is usually presupposed as given. Hence, it is not in the power of the individual speaker to add at will new contexts or names. The mere wish to *create* an object by using a word as if it were a singular term does not work. Saying so does not make it so. We cannot add without further ado, for example, fictitious solutions of $x^2=-1$ to the real numbers in order to create the complex numbers. What we have to do is to define the truth-values for a whole system of new sentences in which the new terms occur. This, and only this, is the true reading of Frege's critique against what I would like to call *linguistic creationism*. This criticism does not entail that Frege is a Platonist like, for example, Georg Cantor certainly

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

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

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

This shows that the 'vagueness' or 'openness' in our talk about senses or intensions is nothing to be lamented about. It is part of the logical grammar for using expressions like "the sense of

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

X" or "the intension of the expression X". Hence, there is no need for any 'flight from intensions' (Quine 1960: ch. 6) if we only understand what is meant when we say, for example, that the sense of 3+2 is different from 2+3 but equal to III+II. We say, then, that in the relevant contexts we distinguish adding 2 to 3 from adding 3 to 2; but we do not distinguish between different basic notations of 2 or 3. Of course, it is never settled in all generality what can be equal in sense (or 'intension') with respect to *contexts of belief*, because, formally speaking, I might believe that V=III+II is true, not knowing that 5=3+2 is true, for example when I do not know how to use arabic numerals. But when I say, for example, that I believe *of* the number V that *it* is equal to III+II, then *we* would say, most probably, that I believe as well *of* the number 5 that it is equal to 3+2. The reason is that we treat the context "believing of the number x that" as an 'extensional' context with respect to the equality of numbers.

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

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

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

But why did Frege's logicism fail nevertheless? Was it not his 'ontological' belief in a pregiven universe of possible first order dicourse, i.e. a universal realm of objects and extensional predicates or contexts? It was, indeed. Frege wanted to define the numbers as cardinal numbers, i.e. as certain sets or courses-of-values, namely as sets of sets having the same cardinality. And he wanted to define sets as objects with a peculiar property, in distinction, say, to Julius Caesar or the moon. This suggests that he already assumed a whole system of concrete and abstract objects as pre-existing. But his real mistake was to think that we could unify all well determined objects of reasonable discourse into one universe of discourse and keep them apart by defining predicates. He did not see the 'locality' in our constitution of a domain of objects or a realm of entities.[10] Such a realm is given or made explicit by presupposing or (re)constructing an appropriate system of proper names, equalities *and predicates* which fulfil the condition of consistency and extensionality (i.e. the Leibniz-law for the appropriate equalities). The consistency condition says that one and only one of two truth values is attached to any well defined sentence in or about the realm, namely by the defining criteria.

2.2 Sentences as rules and norms of using rules

In the following consideration I show how truth-evaluative semantic is a version of inferential semantics. It belongs to, and should not be separated from, a use-related analysis of meaning. Language is a social art (Quine 1960: ix). It is a mastery of an enormously extended set of techniques of doing things with words. This is the pragmatic view shared, for example, by Wittgenstein, Quine, or Austin. But it can be misleading to characterize the realm of *semantics* proper as a system of *logical and conceptual inference-rules* and distinguish it, with Carnap, from 'pragmatics' as a system *of rules that governs language use in speech acts*. This differentiation of semantics and pragmatics is helpful only as long as we can separate 'semantic' schemes of inference and presuppositions on the level of *sentences* from inferential forms of dealing with *concrete speech acts* governed by special 'pragmatic rules' for illocutionary commitments, entitlements, and implicatures – in addition to, or in adjustment of, sentence-related schemes of semantic inference and presuppositions. The 'rules' (or norms) of proper inferences on the level of sentences are, however, themselves based on a form of joint practice. Hence, we should try to make the *pragmatic foundation of semantics*

[10] To this point see also Sebastian Rödl's paper in this volume.

explicit (cf. Schneider 1975; Kambartel and Schneider 1981). This task includes explications of formal notions of truth in pragmatic terms.

In axiomatic theories we can read logically complex sentences (or axiom-schemes) as expressions for complex rules if we presuppose the handling of the 'detachment rule', i.e. modus ponens. An axiomatic system can be seen, in fact, as a generator of formulas or 'sentences' that, in turn, make certain rules of deduction explicit. The reason is this: The theorems can be either used as premises in applying inference rules, or they can be used directly as expressions for such inference rules. I.e. any 'sentence' of the form 'if a then b' or 'a→b' deduced from the axioms can be used as a deductive rule of the form a⇒b: We are entitled to use the implication-rule in further deductions. The 'detachment rule' of modus ponens: (a,a→b) ⇒ b corresponds to a meta-rule of applying explicit rules, namely (a,a⇒b)⇒b. At the same time, it corresponds to the logical theorem (a&a→b)→b. The deduction rule of *modus ponens* obviously has two premises: a and a→b. It has one conclusion: b. The use of this inference rule cannot be explained by a sentence of the form (a&a→b)→b without presupposing the competence to *use the rule* already. In other words, the *practical competence* to use the inference scheme *modus ponens* correctly is a crucial part of the meanig of an arrow or a conditional phrase of the form "if a, then b" – by which we make an 'inferential norm' explicit. The norm allows us to go from a to b. It 'exists' as an implicit or '*empractical*' (Bühler 1934: 52 and 155; Kamlah and Lorenzen 1973: 48) form of (symbolic) action that we have learnt to perform correctly.

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

It was Hilbert's idea, shared by Carnap, Tarski, and Quine, that the formal concept of logical inference as presented in (classical) predicate calculus *defines* the very meaning of the logical

connectives implicitly, in a holistic, syncategorematic way. According to this 'formalist' approach, the calculus also defines the very concept of logically *valid* inference. Moreover, we allegedly think 'rationally' only if we make conclusions along the lines of a formalized or axiomatized 'logic' – as we know it from the paradigm case of first order predicate calculus. But there is an alternative tradition leading from the work of Gottlob Frege via Gerhard Gentzen to Paul Lorenzen and Robert Brandom. In this tradition, predicate calculus does not *define* the meaning, and use, of the logical vocabulary like "and", "or", "not" and "for all". Rather, the theorems of predicate calculus are 'formally valid' only insofar as they can be seen as *explicit articulations* of *admissible inferential rules*. This concept of admissibility must be understood in relation to an already defined concept of *material validity*. In Frege's approach, the relevant concept of material validity is a presupposed concept of *truth* of elementary (i.e. logically basic) sentences in which no logical operator should appear. In other words, Frege presupposes a system of elementary sentences that are already evaluated as 'true' or 'false' – *tertium non datur*, i.e. non-evaluated sentences must be excluded. This means that Frege presupposes a *non-axiomatic model theory* in interpreting axiomatic systems.[11] Proofs in such models are 'informal' or 'half-formal' in the sense of the Gentzen-tradition of proof theory. In fact, Gentzen has shown (1936) how we can use 'half-formal' rules with non-finite premises in order to define the 'truth' of quantified sentences inferentially even when the domain of the variables is infinite. At least since then we are in a position to read Frege's truth evaluation in an inferentialist surrounding. And we can distinguish it as a non-axiomatic, half-formal semantics from 'Tarskian' semantics which is Hilbertian, deductivist and, hence, merely syntacticist.

Gentzen's ideas were technically developed in meta-mathematical proof theory. Their philosophical impact for formal semantics and, more generally, for a theory of meaning was shown at first in Lorenzen's (1955) work on *operative logics and mathematics*. Lorenzen sees that it is the concept of a *conservative extension* of a system of *material norms of inferences* that defines the concept of *validity* or *admissibility* for logical rules of half-formal and fully formal (syntactic) inference. This has the consequence that there are *different* systems of logical validity: Classical calculus is defined by the fact that it *preserves the evaluation of*

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

*truth for elementary sentences*. The calculus of intuitionistic logic preserves *direct justifiability of existential quantifications* by *effective constructions*.

In a sense, Gentzen and Lorenzen show that there is a *wrong alternative* between Frege's alleged *Platonism* and Hilbert's and Carnap's *formalism* in the philosophy of logic, mathematics, and language. The insight is that there is a third possibility that avoids vague and unclear metaphysical assumptions and, at the same time, the hidden dogmatism in all merely axiomatic approaches: In the formalist tradition of Analytical Philosophy, Carnap's famous principle of tolerance is restricted to different *axiomatic* systems as *syntactic calculi*. Robert Brandom's idea of *Making It Explicit* (1994) stands in the tradition of Gentzen insofar as the rules, and 'sentences', of formal logic are seen as devices to make *valid material inferences explicit*. In order to avoid the rather misleading phrase "implicit rule" – rules, like sentences, are, according to my terminological proposal, a fortiori explicit – I use the words "norm" and "normative" in order to give general hints to the underlying concept of material validity and admissibility. The word "normative" does not have any particular ethical or moral connotation here. And we shall see below how the corresponding concept of admissibility will be developed into perspectival, i.e. speaker- and hearer-related, concepts of (material) *entitlement* and *commitment*. But at first I turn to the question how we can use language in order to refer to the world.

## 2.3 Elementary states of affairs and empirical situations of things

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

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

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

Wittgenstein does not speak about such a realm of present *Anschauung*. But by introducing it we can say in a short way that and why correct statements about *Anschauung* are not empirical but conceptual statements: If you do not agree with me or us sufficiently about when to say that this is (called) red, this yellow, this is a chameleon and that a chair, then you do not understand my or our language and we do not refer to worldly things together in case we use, perhaps by chance, the same words. In other words, the individual and joint mastery of deictical predications referring to present objects of joint *Anschaung* are basic parts of our logical form of linguistic representation. Meaningful statements about the real 'outer world' are *logically much more complex*. They have, according to the basic claim in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, already an inferentialist, even quantificational, structure.

When I say, for example, that outside the door there is a green table, then I say something like this: *if* you (or we) go out the door *then* you (or we) will find a thing about which we *together* would say: "it is a table and it is green". Any appeal to correctness or 'truth' in naming things or predicating properties appeals to some form of "Togetherness" in possible control of reference in present *Anschauung*. In other words, in our understanding of empirical sentences it is already logically or conceptually *presupposed* that we know what to say and when about the thing (table) and its colour (green), at least in situations of present *Anschauung*.

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

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

As a result, I would like to say that meaningful empirical statements are not mere 'observation sentences'. They do not state present facts. They do not only remind us what to say and when

in joint "*Anschauung*". They say something about *how things are*, about a whole "*Sachlage*" in Wittgenstein's sense. An empirical statement about *how things are* is true if the *relevant inferential consequences*, and hence, the corresponding normative 'commitments' of the speaker who utters the statement, are fulfilled, false if not.

## 3. From logical empiricism to social pragmatism

### 3.1 Empiricism's collapse back into physicalist naturalism

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

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

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

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

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

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

words, it is not mere sensation, it is ‘apperception’ and deictical reference in a joint situation of present *Anschauung* that lies at the ground of any knowledge claim which has meaning (i.e. inferential impact) and sense (i.e. perceptual impact) in the Kantian sense.

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

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

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

### 3.2 Chomsky’s and Davidson’s cognitivist theories of radical interpretation

Davidson’s *cognitivist* theory of *radical interpretation*[12] incorporates at least some basic features of Chomsky’s theory of how we (allegedly) develop linguistic competence. Chomsky

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

assumes some learning device by which he wants to explain why humans, not animals, can learn certain syntactic structures, i.e. recursive rules for producing, and parsing sentences. Chomsky's basic idea is this: By being exposed to linguistic usage, the child establishes or 'sets' certain paramaters in its learning device. Davidson's idea of explaing semantic competence proceeds accordingly: Every one of us has to adapt his (linguistic) behavior to the (linguistic) behavior of others in such a way that the pragmatical 'success' of common understanding and cooperation is 'maximized' in some way or other. (Details are not important here). According to Davidson's picture, each of us constructs (or 'figures out') 'rules' or 'schemes' of syntactico-semantical compositions that fit to the sentences he has heard or read.[13] Tarski provides us, according to Davidson, with an outline of the idea how a theory of truth can be read as a theory of interpretation, consisting in a syntacto-semantical analysis of the sentences heard. The idea is that we develop a description of the syntacto-semantical surface and inferential deep structure of all sentences *S* of a language-in-use. I.e. Davidson assumes a kind of parsing device by which we 'analyse' the sentences of a given corpus and construct a 'theory' of truth-conditions' for an infinite set of sentences in such a way that the sentences of the corpus turn out to be true.

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

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

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

Davidson's further idea is that we need some 'triangulation' when we want to project our words to experience. But this does not mean that Davidson shares the insight into the basic role of present *Anschauung* as it is attributed here to the early Wittgenstein (and to Kant, for that matter). The status of Davidson's triangulation is different. It does not mean that I am introduced into a *capacity* to play an active part in a joint practice. If Brandom (1994) followed Davidson in this respect, I could not but disagree. Judgements in which we perform our faculty of joint distinctions of 'objects' (gestalts, things, colours, present movements or what you wish) in *Anschauung* are free actions. They are, as Andrea Kern (2004) aptly says, performances of a rational faculty. In Davidson's picture, however, triangulation only means that I have somehow to adapt my subjective interpretation in order to take the peculiar perspective of you into account. The idea is this: If I, for example, want to interprete your performance of a speech act like "this (thing) here is a red hat", I have to correlate your sentence to my own sentence "that (thing) over there is a red hat". But in fact, we do not do things like this in private. We learn to do it in the context of an already established we-perspective. I.e., the child learns gradually to take part in a practice of uttering and controlling correct statements about joint *Anschauung*. And we often make playfully or joyfully sure that the situation of *Anschauung* is a *shared one*, for example when we point to a mountain and say: "look, the Montblanc", even when knowing that the other(s) already see the mountain and know that it is the Montblanc.

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

The problem of regulism is this: Before we believe in a machinery of developing individual linguistic competence and before we interprete this comptence as a kind of rule-following as we know it from computational linguistics – which has to be understood as a technical device for artificial language processing –, we should better ask if we really are allowed to assume Chomskyan schemes of generative syntax or Davidsonian schemes of radical interpretation in

order to ‘explain’ what we do when we learn to ‘interprete’ the words or sentences we are exposed to. The mere fact that we learn to communicate in a language does not force us to assume, with Chomsky, an inborn theory of grammar nor, with Davidson, a semantic parsing device along a ‘Tarskian’ line of an axiomatically defined truth-in-a-model.[14]

With respect to elementary predication in present joint perception, the later Carnap and Paul Lorenzen proposed that we learn the use of predicators like “this is red” or “this is a stone” in the context of providing deictical examples and counter-examples. What we learn here is not just linguistic behavior but active participation in joint linguistic practice. We learn to differentiate present states of affairs. This very *capacity* to perform the corresponding *Anschauungsurteile* or judgments about apperceptions *at will* makes it possible that we, as individuals, *can err* in such judgements in cases when we, by some chance, do not perform the capacity in the right way, or that we, once again as individuals, *can deliberately tell a lie*, for example when knowing that the addressed others are, by some chance, not in the position to control, with us, the propriety conditions immediately. Whoever tells a lie knows what would be correct. He nevertheless does not say the right thing. But when I commit an error, I fail to perform a generic capacity due to some interfering causes or due to some defect in my ability or learnedness.

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

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

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[14] A parsing device or (radical) interpretation is only a (radical) *translation* into some other formal or natural language. The mastery of the target language already is presupposed. No theory of translation, especially no Tarskian theory can give a sufficient answer to the question how the target language is learned and how it relates to the world. Therefore, Davidson’s theory is a much too weak, no full blooded, theory of meaning, as Dummett (1993: 5) rightly sees.

An important further question is what we do when we *judge in retrospect* that a given use (a token) or usage (a form or type of possible use) is meaningful, correct, or 'true'. The *goal* of inferential semantics is to *replace* the assumption of a metaphysical 'mirror-of-nature'-relation between words and ideas (or thoughts) and between words (or ideas) and their objects by an analysis of the things we *do* with words. The question how we distinguish between the real and the unreal, between the actual and the possible, between the concrete and the abstract is now seen as a *practical* question. These distinctions are neither given nor clear. They have to be reconstructed in the context of our use of words in joint experience, practice, and life – which hopefully is a cooperative, human, practice and life and no 'Humean', solipsistic, and as such merely animal behavior.

Morris and Carnap had still thought that the order of the reconstruction of 'meaning' should proceed from syntax via formal semantics to pragmatics, i.e. from an analysis of syntactically and semantically well-formed sentences to rules of their proper use in utterances. The order was given in nuce by Frege's distinction between truth-evaluative semantics of (mathematical) sentences and the 'pragmatic' performation-sign " ⊢ ", which makes the (written) speech act of assertion explicit. It is easy to see, with Frege, Wittgenstein and J.L. Austin, that there are much more speech acts to be distinguished: questions and commands, promises and excuses, expressions of regrets or expressions of condolence and declarations of intentions, just to name a few. In all these cases it seems, at least at first, that the propositional content p of what is asked for, what is promised, what is intended or what should be excused already must be given. And this means that the truth or satisfaction conditions for assertions 'with the same propositional content' p of these different speech acts must be known already. In order to understand a yes-or-no-question, for example, I must know the truth condition of a possible answer already. In the same way, I must know what the satisfaction condition of an assertion p is in order to understand what is promised or predicted if someone says that he promises or predicts that p. Therefore it seems that despite all the debates about an alleged overestimation of assertions after Frege's linguistic or logicist turn in philosophy of language and linguistics, the semantics of assertive utterances is, in a sense, indeed foundational with respect to the pragmatics of different speech acts.

But, on the other hand, there is a perspectival turn precisely when it comes to an analysis of the truth conditions of sentences and assertions. In a traditional Fregean setting, the truth-value of a sentence S is fixed by some semantic rules. When uttering the assertion

"⊢ *S*" (e.g by writing it down) we *claim* that the value attributed to *S* is the value "true" or "the True". In our development of the inferential approach, however, we found out that a sentence can be read as making a possible rule of inference explicit. A possible claim of the form "⊢ *S*" can be understood in this way: It says that the rule expressed in *S* is valid or can be used. If you, for example, make the claim, I am entitled to use the rule expressed by the sentence and you are committed, in case of a question why the rule is admissible, to show me the reasons for your claim of admissibility. In the case of logical connectives, schematic dialogues between a proponent and an opponent of an assertion, read as a complex rule, can make its 'inferential meaning' explicit. This idea of game-theoretical semantics in a setting of giving and asking for reasons was developed by Kamlah and Lorenzen (1973: 196–213). It reappears in a slightly different, less explicit, form in Brandom's approach.

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

In the development of American Pragmatism, semantic theory also gets a peculiar *pragmatic* and *social twist*. Rorty, for one, takes sides, in a way, with W. James who saw that one of the function of the words "true" lies in the *appraisal* of what is taken to be true by the speaker: The phrase "it is true that" corresponds in many cases to the use of Frege's performation sign "⊢ ". Such a *performative* is neither a *truth-predicate* in a meta-language as in a Tarskian setting, nor is it a *modal operator* as in recursive uses of expressions like "it is (contingently) true that it is possible that it is true that p". For the performative use of "it is true", Frege's redundancy thesis holds: To say that "It is true that it is true that p" is just a stuttering version of "⊢ p". And to say that "it is false that it is true that p" is just the same as ⊢ ¬p. But if we want to refer anaphorically to nominalized sentences and say, for example, what was said there and then is true, we need, of course, a kind of truth-predicate and cannot do only with the performative. I.e. here we have to use the predicative form "x is true".

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

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

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

As we have already seen, the performatory function of appraisal certainly does not exhaust the use of the word "true". An appraisal theory of truth does not solve all the problems of *meaning* and *reference*, of what there *really* is or exists independently of our subjective thoughts and beliefs. Moreover, there is a danger of wishful thinking or instrumentalism, of relativism and of linguistic idealism. As we know, it can happen that certain errors and even lies are, by chance or systematically, somehow beneficial, as Nietzsche has seen already. Russell uses this in his attack of William James: Be it beneficial or not, saying so does not

make things so. Even if a large society takes something as true, this taking something as true does not make it true. Therefore, there is a challenge to avoid or overcome ‘relativist’ dangers without leaving the insights of the previous turns in logical analysis behind. We should resist, in fact, the tendency to return to some open or hidden metaphysical faith, to any sort of objectivism, be it theological, historical, naturalist or expertocratic. Instead, it is necessary to develop a kind of *normative* spin to Rorty’s social twist of pragmatism.

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

## 4. From individual intentionality to social normativity

### 4.1 Intentions and conventions

An alternative approach to a ‘pragmatic’ theory of meaning starts with intentions (Grice 1989) or intention-based conventions (Lewis 1979): In a communicative act, a speaker tries to let a hearer openly understand what he wants him to do or to believe. The openness condition does not presuppose sincerity yet. It is rather a condition of publicity or, for that matter, a condition of expressiveness: The public intention must be explicit in some way or other. It can, as in the case of manipulation or deception, contradict silent intentions. Obviously, the idea fits fairly well to ‘intentional’ uses of symbols or even signals. As Eike von Savigny (1983) has shown, we can use syntactically fairly primitive signals like the horn or the lights of a car in order to warn others or to greet them, to thank them or just to say ‘hello’. The addressee understands the intention in a kind of free cooperation. He has to consider circumstances, possible readings, cancel unfitting and improbable ones and interprete the speaker charitably, for example by silenty or openly correcting obvious or probable mistakes or malapropisms. There is much important work done on these topics in linguistic pragmatics. They include diffentiations between literal and figurative meaning, conceptual inference, presupposition,

implicature, illocutionary and perlocutionary aspects of speech acts and quite some other things. The point I want to make here is just this. The standard situation described by Grice (1989: 24, 92-116 and passim; Meggle 1997: 22) applies only in cases when a speaker or 'sender' already can have definite intentions and the hearer or addresse is able to 'interprete' them by attributing possible intentions to the speech act or communicative act. The speaker must already 'know' (somehow) what he wants the addressee to do or to believe. In order to have, or to ascribe, such definite intentions, it is already presupposed that he knows their specific propositional content. We cannot 'explain' this content by the intentions which underly the use of, say, a sentence.

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

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

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

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

4.2 Flight from intentions – to norms

To *have* well determined intentions and contentions presupposes the competence of taking (correctly) part in a practice of expressing intentions and contentions. This practice already contains a reflective practice in which we control the correctness or propriety of the individual speech acts with respect to situation and context, including what the person later does and says. Moreover, it contains the competence of talking (silently) to oneself. Hence, intending and believing is a social, and cultural, competence. To be able to 'think' in this way presupposes not only linguistic competence but also the faculty of representing possible speakers and hearers in (silent linguistic) representations of roles.[16] This is the core insight of a philosophical linguistic turn that must not be given up by current naturalizations and cognitive theories: Conceptual competence is a basic condition of being human. It is the ability of following (implicit) norms of cooperation and controling the use of (explicit) rules. Brandom's *normative* and at the same time *inferentialist* philosophy of "*Making It Explicit*" tries to avoid, accordingly, (Quine's) regularism, (Millikan's) behaviorism, (Davidson's) internal regulism, but all mystifications of intentionalism as well. According to Brandom, to have well determined intentions in contradistinction to some mere animal desire presupposes the mastery of propositional content. Having intentions means to be in a position of *weak normative commitment*. At first we have to learn, so to speak, the weak normative commitment of *declaring an intention*. In such a declaration of my will, as we might say, I neither 'predict' what I shall do nor do I 'promise' to do it. Nevertheless I am in some weak sense bound to do it. If I never act according to my open (or, for that matter, silent) declaration of my will, I certainly do not know how to have definite intentions. In fact, there is a fairly elaborated practice in which we distinguish between cases in which we change our intentions, and cases in which we do not have a determinate intention at all.

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

Brandom's picture – as I would like to understand it – is this. We learn to take part in an already established social game with its 'implicit' norms of correct play and incorrect moves. These norms show up especially when we look at the practice of 'sanctioning' incorrect moves in one way or other. It is not the expression R of a rule or norm or criterion but the way we distinguish between correct and incorrect moves (perhaps following the expressive intention to follow the rule R) that define what it is to follow the norm or rule in action. Hence, implicit rule-following can be made explicit by use of 'names' or 'symbols' for the rules or, as it were, by whole sentences – on the ground of a practice of controlling the relation between symbolic acts and fulfilments of commitments. Brandom follows Quine insofar as language is treated as a social art, and Davidson, insofar as he supports a deflationary, use-theoretic, concept of truth, or rather, of proper inference as basic for the very concept of meaning. Th difference to Quine and Davidson consists in the insight that all the explicit axioms and rules of formal logic are *linguistic onstructions*. We use them to make *empractically* established forms and norms of inferences explicit. But these norms are *not* to be treated as internal rules of subjective reasoning, as in Davidson's (hidden) internal regulism, nor as merely behavioral dispositions and somehow 'successful' attitudes, as Quine and Millikan treat them. Moreover, Brandom takes the paradox of analysis more seriously: Making implicit norms explicit by rules or sentences always changes the situation. It does so by adding a new practice of rule-following.

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

Brandom's word for controlling correctness is "scorekeeping". The metaphor for the control of fulfilment or non-fulfilment of already acknowledged rules or norms goes back to Lewis (1989). But there, scorekeeping is just a kind of notation. It makes the relevant 'contextual history' for evaluating entitlements and commitments in actual performances of language games between (two) persons in a certain way explicit. It works similar to the evaluation of truth values for logically complex sentences: In both cases the criteria (Lewis speaks of

"scorekeeping functions") are presupposed that tell us how to evaluate ('correctly') further steps in a sequence of moves made in the context of actualising an interactive or cooperative language game. Brandom tries to get rid of this presupposition. His scorekeeping judgements are perspectival and subjective. But if they do not appeal to common criteria, what makes them non-arbitrary?

A comparison with Lorenz and Lorenzen's (1978) notation of dialogical logic shows the difference. There, two persons also play a game of asking for and giving reasons. A proponent wants to defend his claims against real or possible questions of an opponent. If the dialogue is played according to certain rules, the notation presented is a scorekeeping device. We can now look in a systematic way for strategies of the proponent. If he has one, he is entitled to his claim because he can defend it. Real argumentation, however, cannot be reduced to this kind of schematic rules for inferential entitlement and commitment. On the other hand, we need the possibility of an appeal to already accepted rules or norms – or else we cannot distinguish correct from incorrect moves in the game. Discussions *about* the norms or rules are of a different kind. Mastering the meta-game of joint reflective judgement *about* norms and rules in their relation to proprietary actions is something else than to make correct moves according to some (already accepted) norms.

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

### 4.3 Truth, evolution, and religion

Belief and knowledge, understanding and acknowledging take place in a kind of already pre-formed or pre-existing language game that already contains deontic structures. As individuals, we learn to take part in undertaking commitments, granting entitlements to theoretical (verbal) and practical (action-orienting) inferences, and assessing the commitments of speakers. Even the constitution of objective reference has to be understood along this line: We refer to an objective thing in a common space of actual or possible *Anschauung* if we claim, in some sense or other, that you can refer 'to the same thing' and attach 'the same property' (defined by inferential commitments and entitlements) to it. We can be wrong about

such properties and nevertheless refer to an object, for example when we say that the deer over there is brown – but it was, as you might claim (or see), a cow. There obviously are methods of implicit attributions and explicit ascriptions of 'intended' reference that contain partial corrections of implict or explicit identity claims or predications on the side of the hearer. I do not go further into this field. I only repeat the importance of joint *Anschauung* for avoiding the possible danger of sense-data empiricism.

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

There is another shortcoming in Brandom's grand picture I want to mention. I call it the danger of social behaviorism. There is, in fact, still a problem in Brandom's and Rorty's Sellarsianism, shared, for example, by Ruth Millikan. The problem is the unjustified decision to giving physical and biological evolution the last word in all 'explanations' of the very possibility of human competence, even in assessments of the reality and objectivity of such a competence. By this move, evolutionary narratives or cosmological 'myths' become not only the ultimate place for explaining the very existence and genealogy of norms, but criteria for consistency and coherence as well. In fact Rorty wants to explain culture as a continuation of natural evolution. Brandom wants to explain normativity on the ground of the one and only

natural, in the end physical, world, mediated by social behavior of positive and negative sanctions as reactions to the behavior of others. There seems to be a deep faith in the cosmological stories of physics and biology at bottom. But does this not mean that the whole enterprise of giving a non-Platonist account of the human world collapses? It collapses at least if the truth-claims of evolutionary stories are not questioned in their status. As long as this does not happen, they turn into an absolute, in the end in itself Platonist, faith – despite all verbal criticism of the very concept of absolute truth Rorty is famous for.

There would be a different perspective if we put our philosophical reflections into a context of a therapeutic and educational enterprise. Such a more modest point of view starts in the middle of life and practice and takes part in improving a certain culture of language use and language design for the purpose of a better, more reflective understanding of science, culture, and ourselves. If we did this, we would avoid muddling logical and cosmological reasoning. In fact, a lack of reflection on the logical, scientific and cultural status of cosmologies (including human anthropology and history) might be a congenital defect of pragmatism altogether, a defect to be found in Peirce and James and Dewey as well as in Quine, Rorty and Brandom, or so it seems.

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

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**Notes**