
Amsterdam Graduate Philosophy Conference 2010
— Truth, Meaning, and Normativity —
Amsterdam, 30 September – 2 October, 2010

Book of Abstracts

Department of Philosophy/ILLC
Universiteit van Amsterdam

CONFERENCE THEME:
TRUTH, MEANING & NORMATIVITY

The 3rd Amsterdam Graduate Philosophy Conference on “Truth, Meaning, and Normativity” is devoted to continue the discussions that were raised in the previous two conferences, as well as to lay the ground for new ones.

We invite submissions from graduate researchers conducting novel philosophical research into any of the three conference topics. We also encourage submissions that inform the discussion about truth, meaning, and/or normativity by offering a philosophical interpretation of results from other fields such as logic, cognitive psychology and linguistics (including formal semantics and sociolinguistics).

Areas of interest include but are not restricted to: formal theories of truth; deflationism; vagueness; proof-theoretic versus truth-theoretic conceptions of meaning; meaning as use; the semantics-pragmatics interface; compositionality; criteria and evidence for evaluating competing theories of truth and/or meaning; semantic normativity with respect to meaning, use, content, and context; syntax and logical form.

Since the topics of truth, meaning, and normativity naturally feed into each other, we also welcome contributions whose particular aim is to explore any of the many intricate ways in which these notions relate to one another. Submissions on the role that these notions have played, or play, in the broad (analytic) tradition or, more specifically, within the linguistic turn are also of interest to the conference.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Paul Egré (Institut Jean-Nicod, CNRS)

Jeroen Groenendijk (Amsterdam)

Max Kölbel (ICREA/Barcelona)

Hannes Leitgeb (Bristol)

Åsa Wikforss (Stockholm)

CONFERENCE COMMITTEES

Organiser

The Amsterdam Graduate Philosophy Conference is organised by the Department of Philosophy and the Institute for Logic, Language and Computation of the Universiteit van Amsterdam.

Organising Committee

María Inés Crespo, Dimitris Gakis, and Galit Weidman-Sassoon.

Steering Committee

Dora Achourioti, Edgar Andrade, and Marc Staudacher.

Scientific Advisory Board

The conference organisers have consulted: Dr. Maria Aloni, Dr. Paul Dekker, Dr. Catarina Dutilh-Novaes, Prof. Dr. Jeroen Groenendijk, Prof. Dr. Michiel van Lambalgen, Dr. Benedikt Löwe, Dr. Robert van Rooij, Prof. Dr. Martin Stokhof, and Prof. Dr. Frank Veltman.

Programme Committee

Denis Bonnay (Paris), Filip Buekens (Tilburg), Fabrice Correia (Geneva), Paul Egré (Institut Jean-Nicod, CNRS) Henri Galinon (Paris), Manuel García Carpintero (Barcelona), Jussi Haukioja (Turku), Michael Hegarty (Baton Rouge), Wolfram Hinzen (Durham), Ole Hjortland (St. Andrews), David Hunter (Toronto), Vasso Kindi (Athens), Mikhail Kissine (Brussels), Max Kölbel (ICREA/Barcelona) Kepa Korta (San Sebastián), Michiel van Lambalgen (Amsterdam), Daniel Lassiter (New York), Hannes Leitgeb (Bristol), Reinhard Muskens (Tilburg), Daniele Porello (Amsterdam), François Recanati (Paris), David Ripley (Melbourne), Olivier Roy (Groningen), Sebastian Sequoiah-Grayson (Leuven), Isidora Stojanovic (Paris), Martin Stokhof (Amsterdam), Peter Pagin (Stockholm), Luis Urtubey (Córdoba), Stelios Virvidakis (Athens), Åsa Wikforss (Stockholm).

Local Support

The conference organisers appreciate and acknowledge local support on finances and administration from the ILLC buro, in particular from Peter van Ormondt, Ingrid van Loon, and Marco Vervoort.

SPONSORS

Institute for Logic,
Language and Computation

Capaciteitsgroep Logica en Taalfilosofie

Afdeling Wijsbegeerte

NWO-Project
“The Origins of Truth, and the
Origins of the Sentence”

NWO-Project
“Indefinites and beyond: Evolutionary pragmatics
and typological semantics”

NWO-Project
“The Inquisitive Turn: A New Perspective
on Semantics, Logic, and Pragmatics”

NWO & LogiCCC-ESF Project
“Vagueness, Approximation, and Granularity”

Allard Pierson Museum

Gemeente Amsterdam

Thursday, 30 September

| | |
|-------------|---|
| 09:00–10:00 | Welcome and Registration |
| 10:00–10:15 | Opening note of the conference by Steering Committee and Martin Stokhof |

Morning Session — Chair: Martin Stokhof

| | | |
|-------------|---|---|
| 10:15–11:15 | Keynote Speech Hannes Leitgeb | Title: <i>Reducing Belief Simpliciter to Degrees of Belief.</i> <i>On the Unification of Two Standards of Normativity</i> |
| 11:15–11:30 | Coffee break | |
| 11:30–12:10 | Graduate Talk Jönne Speck | Title: <i>Note on Horsten’s Argument for Inferentialist Deflationism</i> Commentator: Leon Horsten |
| 12:15–12:55 | Graduate Talk Monika Gruber | Title: <i>Tarski’s critique regarding the Redundancy Theory applied to all Deflationary Theories of Truth</i> Commentator: Dora Achourioti |
| 13:00–15:00 | Lunch break & coffee | |

Afternoon Session — Chair: Dora Achourioti

| | | |
|-------------|--|---|
| 15:00–15:40 | Graduate Talk Arlette Frederik | Title: <i>Truthmaking and Correspondence: Reflections on Relations and Aims</i> Commentator: Frank Veltman |
| 15:45–16:00 | Coffee break | |
| 16:00–17:00 | Keynote Speech Max Kölbel | Title: <i>An Empirical Basis for Natural Language Semantics</i> |
| 17:15–18:45 | Opening Reception | |

Friday, 1 October

| | |
|-------------|--------|
| 09:30–10:00 | Coffee |
|-------------|--------|

Morning Session — Chair: Katrin Schulz

| | | |
|-------------|--|---|
| 10:00–10:40 | Graduate Talk Rhys McKinnon | Title: <i>Giving Warrant Credit in Warranted Assertibility: Against Wright's Inflationary Argument</i> Commentator: Catarina Dutilh-Novaes |
| 10:45–11:25 | Graduate Talk Pedrio Múrias | Title: <i>An example for sentence meaning</i> Commentator: Sara Uckelman |
| 11:30–11:45 | Coffee | |
| 11:45–12:25 | Graduate Talk Miguel Hoeltje | Title: <i>Failure, Yet Again</i> Commentator: Robert van Rooij |
| 12:30–14:15 | Lunch break & coffee | |

Afternoon Session — Chair: Catarina Dutilh-Novaes

| | | |
|-------------|--|---|
| 14:15–14:55 | Graduate Talk Delia Belleri | Title: <i>Relative Truth, Lost Disagreement and Invariantism on Predicates of Personal Taste</i> Commentator: Floris Roelofsen |
| 15:00–15:40 | Graduate Talk Alex Steinberg | Title: <i>Pleonastic possible worlds</i> Commentator: Paul Dekker |
| 15:40–16:00 | Coffee break | |
| 16:00–17:00 | Keynote Speech Paul Egré | Title: <i>Intentional action, normative expectations and the semantics of gradability</i> |

Saturday, 2 October

| | |
|-------------|--------|
| 09:30–10:00 | Coffee |
|-------------|--------|

Morning Session — Chair: Michiel van Lambalgen

| | | |
|-------------|--|---|
| 10:00–11:00 | Keynote Speech Åsa Wikforss | Title: <i>Skepticism, Normativity and Meaning Determination</i> |
| 11:00–11:15 | Coffee break | |
| 11:15–11:55 | Graduate Talk Jan Willem Wieland | Title: <i>Regresses Against Content Normativity</i> Commentator: Marc Staudacher |
| 12:00–12:45 | Graduate Talk Michael Hannon | Title: <i>If I know, I can't be wrong</i> Commentator: Maria Aloni |
| 12:50–14:15 | Lunch break & coffee | |

Afternoon Session — Chair: Marc Staudacher

| | | |
|-------------|---|---|
| 14:15–14:55 | Graduate Talk Lars Dänzer | Title: <i>Why Linguistic Understanding Ain't in the Head</i> Commentator: Elsbeth Brouwer |
| 15:00–15:45 | Graduate Talk Giacomo Turbanti | Title: <i>Modality in Brandom's Incompatibility Semantics</i> Commentator: Daniele Porello |
| 15:40–16:00 | Coffee break | |
| 16:00–17:00 | Keynote Speech Jeroen Groenendijk | Title: <i>Truth, meaning, and normativity in inquisitive semantics</i> |
| 17:15–18:45 | Conference boat trip | |
| 19:00–22:00 | Conference dinner | |

**Intentional action,
normative expectations and
the semantics of gradability**

Paul Egré

Institut Jean-Nicod, CNRS

The aim of this paper is to discuss an asymmetry found by Joshua Knobe 2003a, 2003b in people's ordinary judgments about intentional action for scenarios with similar causal and epistemic structure but leading to morally different outcomes. I examine an hypothesis put forward recently by Dean Pettit and Joshua Knobe 2009 to account for this effect. According to Pettit and Knobe, one should look at the semantics of the adjective "intentional" on a par with that of other gradable expressions such as "warm", "rich" or "expensive". Whether X is rich or not depends on the scale and threshold relevant to the kind of argument specified by X; similarly, whether an action is intentional or not depends on the kind of action under consideration and on how much the degree of intentionality attached to the action departs from the norm (see Kennedy 2007). What Pettit and Knobe's analogy suggests, however, is that the Knobe effect might be an instance of a broader semantic phenomenon, which concerns the context-dependence of normative standards relevant for the application of gradable expressions.

In the first part of the paper, I adduce further evidence in favor of this hypothesis, based on analogous asymmetries found in people's qualitative assessment of exact probabilities and of exact quantities. Pighin, Bonnefon and Savadori 2009 found that people tend to rank as higher the probability of negative outcomes in comparison to the greater numerical probability of less harmful outcomes. In a recent study, Florian Cova and I found the same bias in people's qualitative judgments about exact quantities for sentences involving the vague quantifier many. What the data confirm is that whether "Many As are Bs" is judged true or false depends not only on the cardinality of As and Bs or on their ratios, but on people's normative expectations regarding how many As should have been Bs in the context under consideration (Sapir 1944, Lappin 2000). Such asymmetries also bear an interesting connection to the framing of outcomes originally discussed by Tversky and Kahneman 1981, whose model actually incorporates a basic asymmetry between the representation of gains and the representation of losses.

In the second part of this paper, I rely on these considerations to refine the semantic model outlined by Pettit and Knobe 2009 in their paper, and go on to discuss the specific lexical semantics of the adjective "intentional". I argue that judgments about whether an action is intentional involve at least two dimensions of comparison, one that concerns how much the action is desired by the agent, the other that concerns how much the action is foreseeable (see Nichols and Ulatowski 2007). Both dimensions of comparison appear to be manipulated in several of Knobe's original scenarios.

References

- Cova F. and Egré P. (2010). Moral asymmetries and the semantics of 'Many', manuscript, Institut Nicod.
- Egré P. (2010). Qualitative Judgments, Quantitative Judgments and Norm-Sensitivity. Commentary on J. Knobe's 'Person as Scientist, Person as Moral-ist', forthcoming in Behavioral and Brain Sciences.
- Kennedy C. (2007). Vagueness and Grammar: the Semantics of Absolute and Relative Gradable Adjectives, *Linguistics and Philosophy* 30, 1-45.
- Knobe, J. (2003a). Intentional Action in Folk Psychology: An Experimental Investigation. *Philosophical Psychology*, 16, 309-324.
- Knobe J. (2003b). Intentional Action and Side-Effects in Ordinary Language. I, 63, 190-193.
- Lappin S. (2000). An intensional parametric semantics for vague quantifiers. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 23, 599-620.
- Nichols S. & J. Ulatowski (2007). Intuitions and individual differences: The Knobe effect revisited. *Mind & Language*, 22, 346-365.
- Pettit D. & J. Knobe (2009). The Pervasive Impact of Moral Judgments. Forthcoming in *Mind and Language*.
- Pighin S., Bonnefon J-F. & Savadori L. (2009). Overcoming number numbness in prenatal risk communication. Unpublished manuscript, University of Toulouse and Department of Cognitive Science and Education, University of Trento.
- Sapir E. (1944). Grading, a Study in Semantics. *Philosophy of Science*, Vol. 11, No. 2, pp. 93-116.
- Tversky A. and Kahneman D. (1981). The Framing of decisions and the psychology of choice. *Science* 211 (30), 453-58.

Truth, meaning, and normativity in Inquisitive Semantics

Jeroen Groenendijk

Universiteit van Amsterdam

In inquisitive semantics, pragmatics and logic, we aim to develop a notion of meaning that directly reflects that the (or at least a) primary use of language is communication in dialogue, the exchange of information in a cooperative dynamic process of raising and resolving issues.

The basic technical idea is simple: the proposition expressed by a sentence is defined as a non-empty set of possibilities, where each possibility is a set of indices (a set of possible worlds). In the statement of the semantics for a particular language we recursively state which proposition is expressed by each of the sentences of the language. The details of such a meaning assignment will depend on the language under consideration, and the specific semantic phenomena that we want to focus on.

The formal semantic notion of a proposition as a set of possibilities comes with a certain pragmatic interpretation: we view a proposition as a proposal to enhance the common ground, where the possibilities in the proposition serve to draw attention to specific ways of doing so. Thereby the notion of a proposition as such gives rise to a notion of direct compliant responses (and their counterparts). It is a notion of meaning that can be looked upon as directly reflecting central features of the interactive use of language in dialogue.

In the talk I will illustrate this abstract picture with more concrete examples, and will fill in some more conceptual (rather than technical) details. In doing so, the notions of ‘truth’ (or rather informative content) and ‘meaning’ in inquisitive semantics will automatically turn up. The intended focus of the talk is to reflect on the issue whether (in which sense, to what extent) ‘normativity’ is an ingredient of the inquisitive notion of meaning. Part of the answer seems obvious: normativity is not an ingredient or the formal logical notion of a proposition as a set of possibilities. But does the pragmatic interpretation of a proposition as a proposal to enhance the common ground give rise to a normative notion of meaning? I will defend the position that the answer is: Yes.

URL: <http://www.illc.uva.nl/inquisitive-semantics>

An empirical basis for natural language semantics

Max Kölbel

ICREA at Universitat de Barcelona

There are various different accounts of the empirical significance of semantic theorizing, partly corresponding to different ways of pursuing semantics. In this paper, I shall first discuss the models proposed

by Grice/Lewis, McDowell and Davidson. I shall argue that these approaches, while exhibiting a certain admirable purity, have little to do with the actual practice of natural language semanticists. I then propose an alternative conception of the empirical significance of semantic theorizing, one which focuses judgements of the correctness of (actual or imagined) utterances as the basic pre-theoretically available data to be predicted/explained by semantics. I explain how a semantics only interacts with these data via the medium of pragmatics. Cognitive and instrumentalist versions of this conception are then explored.

Reducing Belief Simpliciter to Degrees of Belief. On the Unification of Two Standards of Normativity

Hannes Leitgeb

University of Bristol

We prove that given quite reasonable assumptions, it is possible to give an explicit definition of belief simpliciter in terms of subjective probability, such that it is neither the case that belief is stripped of any of its usual logical properties, nor is it the case that believed propositions are bound to have probability 1. Belief simpliciter is not to be eliminated in favour of degrees of belief, rather, by reducing it to assignments of consistently high degrees of belief, both quantitative and qualitative belief turn out to be governed by one unified theory. Turning to possible applications and extensions of the theory, we suggest that this will allow us to see: how the Bayesian approach in general philosophy of science can be reconciled with the deductive or semantic conception of scientific theories and theory change; how the assertability of conditionals can become an all-or-nothing affair in the face of non-trivial subjective conditional probabilities; how knowledge entails a high degree of belief but not necessarily certainty; how primitive conditional probability functions (Popper functions) arise from conditionalizing absolute probability measures on maximally strong believed propositions with respect to different cautiousness thresholds; how conditional chances may become the truthmakers of counterfactuals; and how the approximate truth of propositions can be derived from a semantic notion of probability.

Skepticism, Normativity and Meaning Determination

Åsa Wikforss

Stockholm University

It has been much debated whether meaning is essentially normative. The debate stems from Saul Kripke’s book on rule-following and meaning skepticism. I have argued elsewhere that there are strong reasons to reject the normativity thesis. If so, what

follows for the skeptical challenge? The challenge is to find facts in virtue of which speaker *S* means *m* by *t*, i.e. to find *meaning determining* facts. According to some writers, rejecting normativity seriously weakens the skeptical argument. If meaning is normative, it is argued, all theories that attempt to provide a naturalist, reductionist account of the relevant meaning determining facts can be ruled out *a priori*. This, it is argued further, leaves anti-reductionist accounts and these are inherently unable to provide a non-question begging reply to the skeptic. I suggest, by contrast, that rejecting normativity does little to settle the debate. First, the topics of naturalism and normativity are only loosely connected. Second, the most serious difficulty facing naturalist theories (the problem of error) does not have anything to do with normativity in the first place. Instead, I argue, the problematic assumptions that are driving the skeptical argument concern meaning determination. In particular, we should question the assumption that a straight solution to the skeptical challenge need take the form either of full-blown reductionism or of quietistic anti-reductionism. I end by relating the skeptical challenge to some recent pessimism concerning the ‘foundational project’, the project of providing an informative account of meaning determination.

GRADUATE TALKS

**Relative Truth, and
Lost Disagreement and Invariantism
on Predicates of Personal Taste**

Delia Belleri
University of Bologna

One of the advertised advantages of Relativism on predicates of personal taste is that it manages to capture those elements of contradiction and faultlessness that characterise disagreement in the personal taste area of discourse. Contrary to this line of thought, I argue that Relativism fails to even capture any interesting notion of disagreement. The reason is that a genuine disagreement is one in which a fact of the matter in the world can settle the dispute. Since Relativism is incompatible with the idea of a fact of the matter ultimately settling which party is asserting the truth, it follows that there cannot be a such thing as a “relativistic disagreement”. If genuine disagreement is to be preserved in the taste area of discourse, Relativism has to be dropped altogether.

Against Relativism, I contend that theories that see predicates like ‘tasty’ as relative are mistaken, in that they conflate the *reasons* a subject *S* has for asserting that *X* is tasty with the *truth-conditions* of a subject’s assertion to the effect that *X* is tasty. In light of these considerations, I defend an Invariantist view in which ‘tasty’ is an un-relativised predicate and in which utterances containing ‘tasty’ are absolutely true or false. In

defence of Invariantism, I provide evidence based both on semantic intuitions and intuitions about the use of taste-predicates in ordinary linguistic practice, notably in the practices of disagreement and retraction. Along with an Invariantism in semantics, I defend the legitimacy and innocuousness of a Realist approach in the metaphysics of properties as e.g. tastiness, by arguing that even if Realism was true, its predictions would be compatible with the way subjects are actually likely to behave with respect to matters of taste. In other words, even if Realism was true, it would be compatible with the fact that subjects are likely to disagree and retract on taste, because it would be compatible with different subjects having different *experiences* concerning the tastiness of this or that culinary item.

I finally emphasise that and Invariantist/ Realist approach is the one that, as opposed to its competitors, manages to grant the desired predictions with respect to disputes of taste: it predicts *contradiction* insofar as the contents of the opponents’ assertions are depicted as genuinely incompatible, and it predicts *faultlessness* insofar as it allows different subjects to rely on different and, at occasions, contrasting experiences concerning the taste-related properties of food.

**Why Linguistic Understanding
Ain’t in the Head**

Lars Dänzer
University of Cologne

The paper considers the question whether understanding properties, i.e. the properties attributed by sentences of the form ‘ $\ulcorner A \text{ understands } E \urcorner$ ’, where *A* refers to a speaker and *E* to a linguistic expression, are internalistically or externalistically individuated, that is, whether their possession supervenes on the internal properties of subjects or not. While this question has rarely, if ever, been explicitly addressed, Putnam seminal discussion in his “The Meaning of ‘Meaning’” strongly suggests that externalism about understanding and externalism about meaning in an idiolect amount to one and the same thing and will thus hold to exactly the same extent, if at all. Call this the ‘Suggested View’.

The paper defends two related claims. First, I offer an extended argument for the view that understanding properties are externalistically individuated *tout court*; that is, for the view that with respect to *all* linguistic expressions *E*, the possession of the understanding property corresponding to *E* does not supervene on the internal states of a speaker. Secondly, I claim that the Suggested View about the relation between externalism about idiolectal meaning and externalism about understanding is mistaken. As emerges from my argument for the first claim, the considerations that count in favour of externalism about understanding are independent of those that count in favour of externalism about idiolectal meaning and do not depend on the view one takes with respect to the prospects of the latter position. Thus, contrary to what is claimed by the Suggested View, externalism about understanding

emerges as compatible with both internalism and externalism about idiolectal meaning.

The paper ends by offering tentative diagnosis of the conflation that may be responsible for Putnam's failure to distinguish properly between externalism about idiolectal meaning and understanding in "The Meaning of 'Meaning'".

References

Putnam, Hilary (1975): "The Meaning of 'Meaning'". In: Putnam, Hilary: *Mind, Language and Reality. Philosophical Papers*, Volume 2. Cambridge [et al.]: Cambridge University Press, pp. 215-271.

Truthmaking and Correspondence: Reflections on Relations and Aims

Arlette Frederik
Durham University

Truthmaking theories can be presented as competitors to correspondence theories of truth or as a version of such theories. There does not, however, appear to be much discussion as to what way of presenting the relation between the two theories would be optimal, and the issue left to the discretion of individual authors. I discuss how to present the relation between truthmaking and correspondence theories through arguing, first, that truthmaking and correspondence theories are similar when viewed in light of the nature of the relation between truthbearers and features of the world both posit. Second, I maintain that neither truthmaking nor correspondence theories aim to define truth. Instead, both will be treated as attempts to provide a criterion of truth. I conclude that truthmaking theory is best presented as a version of the correspondence theory.

Tarski's critique regarding the Redundancy Theory applied to all Deflationary Theories of Truth

Monika Gruber
Universität Salzburg

One of the most popular approaches to truth in the twentieth century is presented by the deflationists, whose theories originate from Ramsey's revolutionary statement made in *Facts and Propositions*. However, the real turning point in the development of the theories of truth was made by Tarski. He presented an impeccable definition of truth which gave the truth its central role in philosophical thought. All further theories of truth use as basis Tarski's equivalence schema. Ironically, the deflationary theories of truth which deny that truth is a substantial property also took their inspiration from Tarski's definition of truth.

After stating the impossibility of constructing a materially adequate and formally correct definition of

the notion of truth within the colloquial languages, Tarski proves his attempts successful on the grounds of a formalized language. He delivers the necessary terms, axioms and definitions and arrives at the famous Convention T (Tarski, 1933). On its basis he develops the *equivalence of the form T* (1943), where an arbitrary sentence is replaced by the letter 'p', and the name of this sentence is replaced by the letter 'X'. Since the logical relation between the two sentences 'X is true' and 'p' is equivalence the following equivalence schema holds: *X is true, if and only if, p*. The deflationists hold that all that can be meaningfully said about truth can be said by the means of the equivalence schema. Tarski believes the matter to be much more complicated. If the investigated language contained a finite number of sentences, and if we could enumerate all these sentences, then the construction of a correct definition of truth would not be a problem. However, since languages contain infinitely many sentences, the definition constructed according to the above schema would also have to consist of infinitely many words. Such sentences cannot be formulated either in the metalanguage or in any other language. Hence, Tarski introduces the notion of the *satisfaction of a given sentential function by given objects*, in this case by a given class of individuals. Tarski's conception of truth consists in regarding the sentence 'X is true' as equivalent to the sentence denoted by 'p'. Therefore, the term 'true', whether occurring in a simple sentence or in a complex one as a part of the expression 'X is true', can be removed, and the sentence of the metalanguage can be substituted by an equivalent sentence in the object language. However, the term 'true' cannot be eliminated in all cases. Perhaps, the most important example of the sentences where the predicate 'is true' plays an essential role is that of universal statements. According to the deflationary account, the function of the truth predicate is to express certain infinite conjunctions and disjunctions. They hold that the infinite conjunctions yield the same sense as the generalization of their instances. And this is where deflationism fails. Universal statements do not have the same sense as the infinite conjunction of their instances. As Gupta (1993) points out, they do not even imply the same things, they are equivalent only in a much weaker sense. The deflationists have ignored the difference between affirming the generalization and affirming each of its instances. Perhaps the most important reason why generalizations involving 'true' are so useful is that they do not mean the same as their instances analysed separately. Therefore, Tarski's critique regarding the redundancy theory applies to all deflationary theories of truth.

References

Gupta, Anil, 1993, "A Critique of Deflationism" in Armour-Garb, B. P. and JC Beall, (eds.), 2005, *Deflationary Truth*, Chicago: Open Court, pp. 203-205.

Tarski, A., 1933, "Pojęcie prawdy w językach nauk dedukcyjnych", in Tarski, A., *Pisma Logiczno-Filozoficzne*. Tom 1. Prawda, Zygmunt, J., (ed.), 1995, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, pp. 3-172.

Tarski, A. 1943, "The Semantic Conception of Truth and the Foundations of Semantics" in Horwich, P.

(ed.), 1994, *Theories of Truth* - (International Research Library of Philosophy 8), Dartmouth: Dartmouth Publishing Company Limited, pp. 107-141

If I know, I can't be wrong

Michael Hannon

King's College, University of Cambridge

Contextualism in epistemology is for many an appealing solution to scepticism because it promises to explain the intuitive force of the sceptic's argument while maintaining that our ordinary knowledge ascriptions are true. In this paper, I defend contextualism from the charge that it begs the question against scepticism. My defense will combine the contextualist thesis as outlined by Keith DeRose with an externalist account of knowledge that is influenced by Timothy Williamson's *Knowledge and Its Limits*. In making my defense, I also distinguish three broad types of scepticism that vary in degree: moderate, immoderate, and radical. My conclusion is that contextualism can avoid the charge of begging the question against the sceptic if we abandon the idea that having knowledge requires that one is in a position to know that one has it.

Failure, Yet Again

Miguel Hoeltje

Humboldt Universität zu Berlin

The most detailed proposal of how to construct genuine meaning-theories from a broadly truth-theoretic perspective is also the most recent one: the account developed in a series of publications by Ernest Lepore and Kirk Ludwig (L&L). Unfortunately, the account fails. As I will show in this paper, L&L-style theories do not suffice to put someone into the position to understand the object-language. One of the fundamental problems proponents of truth-theoretic semantics must face — specifying the role a truth-theory is supposed to play within a meaning-theory — thus remains unsolved. The manner in which the current proposal fails may tentatively be taken to suggest a general pessimistic diagnosis; it may well be that there simply is no way to construct meaning-theories within a truth-theoretic framework.

Giving Warrant Credit in Warranted Assertibility: Against Wright's Inflationary Argument

Rhys McKinnon

University of Waterloo

Crispin Wright has famously argued that a deflationary theory of truth cannot account for truth's role

in norms of warranted assertibility. Truth and warranted assertibility are normatively coincident but extensionally divergent and the only explanation of this is some property of truth. Thus, since truth has a property above what can be accounted for by the disquotational schema, truth amounts to something more substantial than the deflationist can allow. Thus, deflationism fails. Or, so goes the argument. In this paper I will argue that Wright mistakenly attempts to explain the normative coincidence but extensional divergence of truth and warranted assertibility as a property of truth. Instead, I will argue that it is a fundamental property of warrant that explains this difference. Consequently, the deflationist position can adequately account for truth's role in warranted assertibility and Wright's inflationary argument fails.

An example for sentence meaning

Pedro Múrias

University of Lisbon

This paper presents a definitional schema for the semantic terms¹ $\ulcorner \varphi \urcorner$, as applicable to any sentence and where " φ " may be replaced by any that-clause. Such schema yields, I claim, extensionally correct definitions without semantic terms in their definienda. The noteworthy feature of these definitions is that they are definitions by example. A second feature is that they relate sentences to rational responses to their possible utterances. The schema is based on the idea that every token (utterance) of a sentence that expresses something calls for a certain rational response equal to the rational response that a token of the chosen exemplar would call for in equivalent circumstances. I submit my claim in Part One, where I also point out one first reason why definitions by example seem appropriate.

In Part Two I suggest that expressing is nothing more than satisfying such kind of definitions by example, *i.e.*, that there is nothing about a sentence expressing 'something' other than the 'coincidence' or 'equality'² between the rational responses its possible utterances would elicit and those elicited in equal circumstances by utterances of any other sentence that expresses 'something'. In other words, my conjecture is that for a sentence to express 'something' now is for it to have a history that makes it match an exemplar in regard to the rational responses their possible future utterances would elicit. After introducing this conjecture, I address two likely objections against it. The first one contends that a sentence does not express something because some responses to its utterances are rational; on the contrary, such responses are rational because the sentence expresses what it does. The second objection says that if expressing were nothing more than being a sentence all of whose (infinite) possible utterances would elicit rational responses equivalent to those elicited, *ceteris paribus*, by other sentences that express something, then it would be impossible to know that some sentence expresses something. I argue that both objections fail.

On the whole, the paper presents a response-dependence theory of expressing that attends to responses under all possible circumstances, and not only to those in favourable conditions. Response-dependence theories about terms (or concepts) usually rely on normal or ideal conditions and on normal or ideal subjects.³ The relevant responses for the elucidation of a term are those elicited from such subjects under such conditions. Moreover, those responses are, for standard theories, tokens of some type of attitude, action, sensation or emotion. The absence of such an attitude, action, sensation or emotion, if it is a relevant response, counts against the applicability of the term. In addition, philosophers often care for responses that would occur under favourable circumstances, whether rational or not. Sometimes, as with sensations, the responses may not be the kind of thing that could be rational. My account differs from these standard accounts in these three respects. I shall consider only rational responses — possible rational responses — in an attempt to explain meaning (actually, expressing) through rationality. I am similarly concerned with both beliefs and lack of beliefs. And I shall not confine my attention to responses in normal or ideal circumstances: every circumstance will matter, my only worry being that, other things being equal, responses are in a sense ‘the same’ for every case of something expressing something. The idea of attending to responses under all possible circumstances, and not only to those in favourable conditions, is this paper’s most significant departure from prevailing response-dependence theories.

Notes

¹ I do not use “term” in any technical sense. Here, for example, the terms are all the expressions constituted by “expresses” and a that-clause following it.

² I shall use “equality”, “coincidence” and “equivalence” interchangeably.

³ See e.g. Johnston (1989), Pettit (1999) and Haukioja (2007). Response-dependence theories for semantic terms, even if not using that label, have also asked for ‘ideal’ or ‘optimal’ conditions. See Wright (1989) and Boghossian (1989). About the general need for such a requirement, see Wright (1988).

References

Boghossian, Paul (1989) “The Rule-Following Considerations”, *Mind*, Vol. 98, No. 392, pp. 507-549.

Haukioja, Jussi (2007) “How (Not) to Specify Normal Conditions for Response-Dependent Concepts”, *The Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 85, pp. 325-331.

Johnston, Mark (1989) “Dispositional Theories of Value”, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary Volumes, Vol. 63, pp. 139-174.

Pettit, Philip (1999) “A Theory of Normal and Ideal Conditions”, *Philosophical Studies*, Vol. 96, pp. 21-44.

Wright, Crispin (1988) “Moral Values, Projection and Secondary Qualities”, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary Volumes, Vol. 62, pp. 1-26.

Wright, Crispin (1989) “Wittgenstein’s Rule-following Considerations and the Central Project of Theoretical Linguistics”, in Alexander George (ed.), *Reflections on Chomsky*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, pp. 233-64.

Note on Horsten’s Argument for Inferentialist Deflationism

Jönne Speck

*University of St Andrews and Birkbeck,
University of London*

The paper evaluates Horsten’s argument for inferentialist deflationism about truth [Horsten (2009)]. Horsten assumes that the best formal theory currently available does not prove general principles. I argue that the theory developed by Hartry Field [Field (2003), (2007), (2008)] disproves this assumption. According to Horsten’s own criteria, it outruns his favourite *PKF* [Halbach & Horsten (2006)]; and it proves general principles. I argue that Horsten’s treatment of Field’s theory is unsatisfactory but develop an alternative response on his behalf: Field’s theory is expressively limited. I discuss Field’s claim of having advanced a *revenge-immune* solution to the paradoxes but then turn to argue against the presumption that only *semantically self-sufficient* formal theories are relevant for the deflationist project. I conclude that Horsten’s argument rests on a contentious claim about the semantic competence of ordinary speakers. Thus, he has failed to establish inferentialist deflationism.

References

Field, H. (2003). A Revenge-Immune Solution to the Semantic Paradoxes. *Journal of Philosophical Logic*, 32:139-17.

Field, H. (2007). Solving the Paradoxes, Escaping Revenge. In Beall, J., editor, *Revenge of the Liar: New Essays on the Paradox*, pages 78-144. OUP, Oxford.

Field, H. (2008). *Saving Truth from Paradox*. Oxford University Press, New York.

Halbach, V. and Horsten, L. (2006). Axiomatizing Kripke’s Theory of Truth. *The Journal of Symbolic Logic*, 71(2).

Horsten, L. (2009). Levity. *Mind*.

Pleonastic Possible Worlds

Alex Steinberg

*Humboldt Universität zu Berlin
University College London*

The standard semantics for the modal fragment of natural languages can only be correct if there is more than one possible world. The nature and existence of possible worlds is thus of fundamental importance for such a semantics. The paper develops an account of possible worlds in the spirit of the pleonastic account of abstract entities in general, due to Stephen Schiffer

(2003: ch. 2). The main motivation is that possible worlds share a telling feature with other abstracta like properties and propositions: our canonical epistemic access to them is via transformations that take us from sentences in which these entities are not mentioned or quantified over to sentences in which they are so-called something-from-nothing transformations. Definitions are proposed that ensure that these transformations turn out to be valid as a matter of conceptual necessity.

Modality in Brandom's Incompatibility Semantics

Giacomo Turbanti

Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa

In the fifth of his *John Locke Lectures* Robert Brandom takes up the challenge to define a formal semantics for modelling linguistic contents as established according to his normative analysis of linguistic practices. In Brandom (1994) he describes *sapient* beings as engaging in practices of *giving and asking for reasons*, whose contents are defined by what speakers are *entitled* and *committed* to endorse: in fact the commitment to one *reason* might rule out the entitlement to others, in the sense that it is *incompatible* with them. Incompatibility Semantics (*IS*) is Brandom's attempt to define a formal semantics as a model for those contents: his basic idea is to define the semantic interpretant of a sentence *p* as the set of sentences incompatible with it.

Unfortunately, it can be proved that in the original definition the modal system represented by *Incompatibility Semantics* collapses into propositional calculus. To understand why, begin with noticing that, in *IS*, incompatibles behave like *contraries*: one can't commit to both, but can commit to neither. This, conversely, generates inside a language *families of compatible sentences* which do not rule out each other, in the sense that they can in principle be endorsed all together. Now, Brandom's definition for the introduction of modal operators is such that it makes the semantic evaluation of modal vocabulary insensible to these families and that makes modal vocabulary superfluous.

In this paper I show how *IS* can be modified to overcome this failure, by applying some results from Göcke et al. (2008) and Peregrin (2009): the required modifications consist in adapting and including in *IS* the main notions of Kripke's standard framework of possible worlds. First, possible worlds are introduced in a standard way as maximally compatible sets of propositions. This makes precise sense of the idea of families of compatibles. Then, a *compossibility* relation – a counterpart of Kripke's *accessibility* – is defined so that two worlds are *compossible* if any piece of the one is compatible with *some* piece of the other. Notice this is to treat compossibility as a second level compatibility. Eventually, a Kripkean definition of modal operator is provided in *IS*. This semantics I call, after Peregrin, *Extended Incompatibility Semantics (EIS)*.

The major benefit of this implant of possible worlds is that it prevents the collapse to propositional calculus by forcing the semantic evaluation of modality to

take into account families of compatibles. However one might wonder whether the benefit is paid at the price of the failure of Brandom's original project with *IS*. In fact *IS* was supposed to deploy a *directly* modal notion of entailment and substitute the metaphysically laden semantic primitive of *truth in a world* with the pragmatically entrenched one of incompatibility. If instead it would be shown that the whole machinery of possible worlds were nonetheless presupposed in order to obtain the same expressive results of Kripkean modal logic, then the value of *IS* would quickly get lost.

But these worries are misplaced. The relation of *compossibility* and the modal operators in *EIS* are defined only in terms of *compatibility*, so to make explicit the relations between sets of sentences belonging to different families of compatibles. Compare with kripkean relational semantics: first the notion of *Truth* is appealed to in order to define entailment, and *then* the relation of *accessibility* is independently introduced with the apparatus of possible worlds in order to define modal operators. In other words the gap between *IS* and *EIS* is not notional but expressive because *EIS* can be *elaborated* from *IS*, in the distinguished sense of Brandom (2008) that by knowing how to deploy *IS* one already knows all she needs to know in order to deploy *EIS*.

References

- Robert Brandom. *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment*. Harvard University Press, 1994.
- Robert Brandom. *Between Saying and Doing: Towards an Analytic Pragmatism*. Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Benedikt Paul Göcke, Martin Pleitz, and Hanno von Wulfen. How to Kripke Brandom's Notion of Necessity. In Bernd Prien and David P. Schweikard, editors, *Robert Brandom. Analytic Pragmatist*. Ontos, 2008.
- Jaroslav Peregrin. Brandom's Incompatibility Semantics. *Philosophical Topics*, 2(36), 2009.

Regresses Against Content Normativity

Jan Willem Wieland

Ghent University

Is the content of our thoughts determined by norms such as

- if I know that *p*, then I ought to believe that *p*;
or
- if I believe that *p* and I believe that if *p* then *q*,
then I ought to believe that *q*?

The answer by Glüer & Wikforss (2009) is negative: the content of our thoughts is not determined by such norms (not even partially). They defend their position on the basis of two regress arguments. Here are parts of the texts:

Thus, belief formation motivated by rules turns out to be impossible; a vicious regress ensues. Let us call this regress of rules the regress of motivations. (2009: 56)

Let us call this the regress of contents. Its moral is the following: CD normativism cannot, on pain of vicious regress, construe any kind of intentional mental state as a condition on rule-following. (2009: 57)

The aim of this paper is to clarify and evaluate these arguments. What exactly are their conclusions? What premises are responsible for them? As both are regress arguments, it might be expected that they consist of the same kind of premises and inferences. At least, this will be defended in the present paper. In the first part I present an argument schema, and show how Glüer & Wikforss' arguments (just like related arguments from Wittgenstein 1953 and Boghossian 2008) can be instances of that single schema.

Argument Schema

1. For one state of type i , you have to φ .
2. For any state x of type i , if you (would) have to φ , you would ψ .
3. For any state x of type i , if you would ψ , then there would be a new state y of type i and you would φ for x only if you would φ for y .
4. Regress. (1-3)
5. There is an infinity of states for which you would have to φ in order to φ for any state of type i . (4)
6. You cannot φ for so many states.
7. If you would ψ for any state x of type i (where you would have to φ), then you would not be able to φ for any state of type i . (2, 5-6)

In the second part, I go through one of the instances in some more detail, and argue that the dialectical situation is slightly more complicated than a 'dilemma of regress and idleness', as Glüer & Wikforss have dubbed it (2009: 54).

References

- Boghossian, P. A. 2008. Epistemic Rules. *Journal of Philosophy* 55: 472-500.
- Glüer, K. & Å. Wikforss 2009. Against Content Normativity. *Mind* 118: 31-70.
- Wittgenstein, L. 1953. *Philosophical Investigations*. Transl. G. E. M. Anscombe et al. (4th ed. 2009). Oxford: Blackwell.