HORWICH ON MEANING AND USE

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Abstract

Paul Horwich claims that theories of meaning ought to accommodate the commonsense intuition that meanings play a part in explaining the use of words. Further, he argues that the view that best does so is that according to which the meaning of a word is constituted by a disposition to accept, in some circumstances, sentences in which it features. I argue that if meanings are construed thus, they will in fact fail to explain the use of words. I also argue that if we insist, as Horwich does, on the commonsense assumption that meanings are a species of entity, all versions of the view that meaning is constituted by our dispositions to use words will have to be rejected. I do not, however, claim that such theories ought to be rejected. My point is that they are incompatible with the requirements of commonsense. Further, I suggest that it is premature to impose such requirements on theories of meaning.

Introduction

A version of the thesis that the meaning of a word derives form its use has recently received sustained support from Paul Horwich (1998). According to Horwich, a major requirement on a theory of meaning is that it accommodate the commonsense view that meanings play a part in explaining the use of words. He goes on to argue that the view that best does so is that according to which the meaning of a word is constituted by a certain disposition to use it, namely by a disposition to accept, in some circumstances, sentences in which it features. In what follows, I argue that if meanings are construed

thus, they will in fact not explain the use of words. I also argue that if we insist, as Horwich does, on the commonsense assumption that meanings are a species of entity, all versions of the view that meaning is constituted by our dispositions to use words will have to be rejected. I do not, however, claim that such theories ought to be rejected. My point is that they are incompatible with the requirements of commonsense. Further, I will suggest that it is premature to impose such requirements on theories of meaning.

Acceptance Properties and Use

The core of Horwich's theory of meaning is the view that the meaning of a word derives from its use. Horwich develops this view through the idea that the overall use of a word stems from its basic acceptance property (1998, p. 45). A basic acceptance property is, for Horwich, a non–intentional property that determines the conditions under which it is accepted that a word applies to objects. For example, he tells us that the

> fundamental acceptance property underlying our use of 'red' is (roughly) the disposition to apply 'red' to an observed surface when and only when it is clearly red (1998, p. 45).

Now, according to Horwich, the basic acceptance property of a word constitutes another property or 'use regularity'. We are to suppose that there is, for each word, w, a basic acceptance property, and that there is, in virtue of this basic acceptance property, a property or use regularity of the form

All uses of w stem from its possession of acceptance property A(x).

The meaning of a word can then be identified with this property or use regularity. On Horwich's view, the meaning or meaning property of a word is the property that all its uses stem from its basic acceptance property (1998, p. 6 & p. 46). In short, we are to suppose that 'the meaning property of a word is constituted by [rather than identified with] its having a certain basic acceptance property' (1998, p. 46). It is in virtue of its possessing a basic acceptance property that a word has the meaning property that its uses stem from its basic acceptance property.[1]

Horwich, it should be noted, rejects the view that if some property constitutes the meaning property of a word, we can explain why it 'constitutes that meaning property rather than some other slightly different one' (1998, p. 65). This seems to conflict with his claim that acceptance properties constitute meaning properties. If, for example, the fact that 'red' means red is constituted by the fact that speakers are disposed to apply 'red' to an observed surface when and only when it is clearly red, it seems that information about speakers' dispositions to apply 'red' could be used in order to explain why it has the exact meaning it has. In virtue of its acceptance property, 'red' stands in a non–semantic relation with something like the form 'is, when a thing is clearly F, liable to be applied to' to each red thing. Does not this suffice in order to explain why 'red' has the meaning it has? Not according to Horwich. He observes that his conception of meaning does not imply that acceptance properties are such that all words stand in non–semantic relations with some common form to their objects (1998, p. 66–8). Thus, there is, according to Horwich, no rule that informs us that if the acceptance property of a word

is such that the word possesses a certain non–semantic relation to what it stands for, then it has the specific meaning property it has. But in the absence of such a rule, we supposedly cannot explain why a word has the specific meaning property it has (1998, p. 65). In the case of ‘red’, for example, it happens to bear a certain non–semantic relation to red things. But there is nothing in Horwich’s theory of meaning that implies that words bear non–semantic relations of this, or indeed of any, form to the things they stand for. Thus, there supposedly is nothing that would allow us to explain why the relation in question constitutes the specific meaning that ‘red’ has.

Why, however, should we accept that basic acceptance properties constitute the meanings of words? Horwich offers a number of reasons for doing so. One of these is that we can thus best fulfil the requirement that a theory of meaning show how the meanings of words partly explain the way words are used (1998, p. 47). On his view, we recognise pretheoretically that it is, in part, in virtue of the fact that a particular word means what it does that we use it as we do. Moreover, he claims, this fact is easily captured by the view that acceptance properties constitute meaning properties. Supposedly, if this view is correct, the meaning of every word is the property that all its uses stem from its basic acceptance property. Descriptions of meanings are thus ‘use laws’ which together, and along with circumstantial considerations, allow deriving the total use of a word. But, Horowich adds,

> it is relatively unclear how any other sort of property of a word (such as reference, a normative characteristic, or some neurological correlate) would constrain its overall use (1998, p. 47).

Methodological Worries

One immediate worry about Horwich's strategy is that it appeals to our pretheoretical or commonsense assumptions about meaning. The fact that a theory of meaning captures these assumptions supposedly counts in its favour. However, Horwich offers no reason to accept our pretheoretical assumptions about meaning. Moreover, it is hard to see why inquiry into the nature of meaning should do so any more than, say, inquiry into the nature of the soul should adopt our pretheoretical assumptions about the soul.

Horwich does indicate that his inquiry is an inquiry into our pretheoretical or ordinary notion of meaning (1998, p. 41, n. 20 & p. 87). This might be thought partly to justify his appeal to commonsense. Even here, however, I would be worried. Why should our commonsense assumptions about our commonsense notion of 'meaning' be accepted? Surely, if we want to determine what people generally mean by 'meaning' we should, as with investigation into any social fact, engage in empirical investigation.

Further, it is hardly an agreed matter that theories of meaning should aim to account for our pretheoretical conception of meaning as opposed to, say, for what meaning is. This, of course, is no objection to Horwich's interest in our pretheoretical conception of meaning. However, it is an objection to applying Horwich's criteria of adequacy to theories of meaning across the board.

I do not, however, propose to reject Horwich's appeal to commonsense requirements on theories of meaning. I merely aim to suggest that it is premature to accept such requirements. This is why the arguments offered here are not supposed to be a critique of

the idea that meanings are constituted by our dispositions to use words. They only establish that if Horwich's criteria of adequacy are accepted, this idea should be rejected.

Acceptance and Conditions of Acceptance

Horwich's theory stands or falls with his claims about the role of basic acceptance properties. In governing the overall use of words, they are supposed to constitute meanings. One important question, then, is whether they do govern the overall use of words. Alexander Miller worries that they do not (2000, p. 166). Where the word 'blue' is appropriately used to accept that something or another is blue, its fundamental acceptance property plays a part in explaining its use. But, asks Miller, what of other uses of the word 'blue'? For example, the use of 'blue' in its being applied to objects in the dark, or in cases where something is dishonestly said to be blue, or in, 'If the mousepad is blue, then it is coloured?'

According to Miller, the above worry is made worse by an additional claim that Horwich makes. Horwich claims that 'total linguistic behaviour' with respect to a word is explained not only by its semantic properties, but also by a small number of other basic properties – phonological, syntactic and pragmatic – together with the basic properties of other words and other factors (1998, pp. 44–5). This leads Miller to worry that sometimes the non–semantic properties of a word might make its fundamental acceptance property redundant to explaining its use. If so, it would be unclear in what sense the fundamental acceptance property of a word governs its overall use (2000, p. 166).

Miller's worry that acceptance properties fail to explain the overall use of words is a serious one. Nevertheless, the directions in which he suggests it should be developed will

not allow it to be substantiated. Consider, first, the issue of whether it is possible for non–semantic properties alone to explain some uses of words. Miller thinks that Horwich opens the door to this possibility by admitting that such properties are relevant to explaining overall linguistic behaviour with regard to a word. However, linguistic behaviour with respect to a word includes much that does not consist in its use. Specifically, mentioning a word is not the same as using it. For example, one can say, 'The word "house" is printed in bold', but in doing so the word 'house' is not being used. Thus, Horwich can admit that non–semantic properties alone explain some of our linguistic behaviour with respect to a word, and yet maintain that this does not occur with respect to its use. Given this, it is hard to see how the assumption that non–semantic properties play a role in explaining overall linguistic behaviour with respect to a word supports any conclusion about how such properties explain or might explain its use.

To be fair, Miller interprets Horwich's view that the fundamental acceptance property of a word explains its overall use as the view that it explains every such use (2000, p. 166). Moreover, in light of Miller's willingness to draw conclusions about what is supposed to explain the use of a word from what is supposed to explain overall linguistic behaviour with respect to it, he may think that 'every use' includes cases in which words are merely mentioned. As far as I can tell, there is nothing explicit in Horwich to counter this reading. But Horwich can be read more charitably as holding only that the fundamental acceptance property of a word explains those of its 'uses' in which its meaning is part of what is being expressed. When one merely mentions a word, one is not expressing its meaning. Moreover, and more significantly, this charitable reading expresses the position Horwich ought to adopt given his requirement that a theory of

meaning show how the meanings of words partly explain the way words are used. The meaning of a word is not relevant to explaining its 'being used' when its meaning is not part of what is being expressed. Thus, given Horwich's requirement, it would not be appropriate to require that a theory of meaning explain such cases.

Horwich does, it should be noted, claim that pargmatic properties play a part in explaining the use of some words and that they constitute the non-descriptive aspects of the meanings of these words (1998, p. 97). Indeed, he admits that some words, such as 'hello', only have non-descriptive meaning, and thus do not possess acceptance properties (1998, p. 98, n. 31). This does contradict his claim that for each word there is an acceptance property, and might seem to confirm Miller's worry that acceptance properties do not explain the overall use of words. In fact, it merely requires a slightly more careful formulation of Horwich's position. His position seems to be that acceptance properties govern the overall descriptive use of words, and that in doing so they constitute their descriptive meanings.[2]

Stephen Schiffer also has some difficulty in interpreting Horwich's claim that acceptance properties govern the overall use of words. He points out that if the meaning of a word governs every one of its uses, it would also govern the use a soprano makes of 'gaseous' in warming up her vocal chords by singing it ten times in succession. From this, he concludes that Horwich holds that the basic acceptance property of a word must explain only the <u>acceptance</u> of sentences in which it is contained (2000, p. 531). However, given Horwich's commitment to the pretheoretical intuition that meanings play a part in explaining the use of words, we ought to reject this interpretation. Pretheoretically, the meanings of words play a part in explaining much more than just the

acceptance of sentences in which it is contained. They also, for example, play a part in explaining the use of words in adopting other intentional attitudes towards sentences. Moreover, cases such as that of the soprano are easily avoided on the reading being urged here. She can be said not to be using the word ‘gaseous’ in that, in singing it, she is, supposedly, not expressing its meaning.

Let us return to Miller’s worry that basic acceptance properties do not govern the overall use of words. What of Miller’s second way of bolstering this worry? Recall, he describes cases in which the word ‘blue’ is applied, but in which its fundamental acceptance property is not manifested. Let us consider his examples. First, consider cases in which the word ‘blue’ is misapplied through self–deception or outright dishonesty. In such cases, the person engaged in deception desires that the use he is making of ‘blue’ will appear, to the party he desires to deceive, to be a manifestation of the word’s acceptance property. But since the acceptance property of ‘blue’ partly determines what counts as an appearance of its own manifestation, it partly determines what will fulfil the deceiver’s desire that the use he is making of ‘blue’ will be an apparent manifestation of its acceptance property. Thus, it partly explains why he uses ‘blue’ as he does. To this extent, the acceptance property of ‘blue’ can be said to govern, albeit indirectly, its use in cases of self-deception or dishonesty. Moreover, one should not require more. A word’s use in deception or dishonesty is only explained by its meaning indirectly via the fact that its meaning partly determines and hence explains what counts as an apparent acceptance that the word applies.

Next, there are to be considered cases in which ‘blue’ is applied in less than optimal epistemic conditions, say in the dark. The worry here seems to be that, as Horwich

describes them, the basic acceptance properties of colour words are dispositions to apply colour words to things that clearly have the appropriate colours. Yet, it is not obvious how such dispositions explain the application of colour words when they apply but do not clearly do so. This, however, merely means that describing the basic acceptance properties of colour words is more complicated than the rough formulations Horwich offers. A slightly improved, but still rough, formulation would be that they consist in dispositions to apply colour words to things when and only when it is known or believed that those things would clearly have the appropriate colours in optimal epistemic circumstances. This description of the acceptance properties of colour words does cover their application in the dark.

We are left with only one of Miller's suggestions about when the use of 'blue' is not governed by its basic acceptance property, namely the case of its use in, 'if the mousepad is blue, it is coloured'. But here too, the acceptance property seems to have an important role. Presumably, the reason we accept that if something is blue, it is coloured, is that the circumstances in which we accept that something is blue are a subset of the circumstances in which we accept that something is coloured. Thus, the acceptance properties of 'blue' and 'colour' come together in order to explain the acceptance of the conditional, 'if the mousepad is blue, it is coloured'. Here too, then, the basic acceptance property of 'blue' seems to govern its use.

Acceptance and Conjecture

Miller does not develop further the argument that acceptance properties fail to explain the overall use of words. His main aim is, rather, to defend Saul Kripke's Wittgenstein–

inspired critique of dispositional theories of meaning (2000, p. 167). I will not follow this line of argument. Instead, I want to insist that acceptance properties do not, after all, govern the overall use of words. Miller's mistake, it seems to me, is that he focuses on cases of acceptance and feigned acceptance. It should be no surprise that a theory of meaning that explicates meaning in terms of acceptance properties can accommodate such cases. However, things are different when the focus is upon intentional attitudes that need not, or even should not, involve acceptance or feigned acceptance. The fundamental acceptance property of a word does not govern its use in expressing all such attitudes. For example, the fundamental acceptance property of a word cannot play a part in explaining its use in conjecture, guesswork, flirtation, expressions of suspicion and expressions of humour.

Consider the use of words in conjecture. To conjecture, in the appropriate circumstances, that phlogiston exists, is to exclude accepting the existence of phlogiston in those circumstances. Thus, when we use the word 'phlogiston' to conjecture that phlogiston exists, we are using it in a way that is not governed by its fundamental acceptance property. Nor is this merely the case with respect to fictional or past cases of conjecture. Both in and out of science, we regularly find ourselves in circumstances in which conjecture is appropriate but not acceptance. It follows that, for many words, use is not governed by fundamental acceptance properties.

This conclusion cannot be avoided by arguing that meaning need not play a part in explaining the use of words in conjecture. Clearly, there is a question about whether the use of a word in raising a conjecture is appropriate or not. Moreover, whether it is appropriate depends in part upon the word's meaning.

Notice also that the current objection is distinct from what Horwich calls the sceptical objection to his view of meaning (1998, pp. 90–1). On the sceptical objection, we could clearly know the meaning of a word even if we did not accept the statements that provide for its basic pattern of use, and thus were not disposed to accept it in the circumstances specified by those statements. For example, we could know the meaning that classical logic assigns to ‘not’ even if we did not accept the principles that classical logic uses to define it, and thus were not disposed to draw the inferences of classical logic. Horwich concedes this, but responds by clarifying that what in fact fixes the meaning of a word is a conditional acceptance property. Meaning is constituted by the conditional commitment to use a certain word to articulate the basic statements that provide for its use, if those statements are accepted (1998, p. 91). Thus, what supposedly gives the word ‘phlogiston’ its meaning is not our acceptance of phlogiston theory, but the conditional commitment to use ‘phlogiston’ as phlogiston theory specifies if it is accepted. However, the objection urged here does not turn upon whether we accept the statements that provide for the basic pattern of use of a word. The point, rather, is that the use of a word in conjecture diverges from the use indicated by its acceptance property, conditional or otherwise. For example, the use that would be made of the word ‘phlogiston’ were phlogiston theory accepted differs, and must differ, from the use made of the word ‘phlogiston’ in conjectures about its existence.

Intentional Attitudes and Use

As I have already suggested, it is not merely the use of words in conjecture that is not governed by fundamental acceptance properties. The same is true of the use of words in

guesswork, flirtation, expressions of suspicion, expressions of humour and so on. Such attitudes often involve the use of words in circumstances where, as with conjecture, acceptance is not, or need not be, the appropriate attitude to the statements in which they feature. For example, where circumstances allow no more than a guess that a certain flask contains phlogiston, one's use of the word 'phlogiston' does not depend upon one's accepting phlogiston theory. For even if one does accept phlogiston theory, doing so can merely indicate that, in the circumstances, accepting that there is phlogiston in the flask is inappropriate. And yet, there clearly is an issue of whether the word 'phlogiston' is being used correctly in the circumstances, and this issue is settled in part by its meaning. Thus, the use of 'phlogiston' in such circumstances is not governed, or partly explained, by the basic acceptance property of phlogiston. Similarly, if circumstances provide for a certain amount of humour about the presence of phlogiston in an empty flask, all the fundamental acceptance property can do is indicate that acceptance is not appropriate in the circumstances. It cannot explain the actual humorous use of the word.

It might, at this point, be thought that I am being unfair to Horwich's position. According to Horwich, the acceptance property of a word is supposed to govern its overall use, and thus to play a part in explaining its overall use. It is not, however, supposed to be the sole factor that does so. As we have seen, Horwich claims that pargmatic properties constitute non–descriptive aspects of words' meanings. Thus, Horwich might argue that where a word's acceptance property seems not to constitute its meaning, this is only because of its pragmatic or non–descriptive meaning. Specifically, where meaning clearly is relevant to use in a way that fundamental acceptance properties are not, it could be argued that non–descriptive meaning alone is so relevant. For

example, conjecture might be construed as acceptance taken together with the pragmatic implication that the acceptance is tentative. Fundamental acceptance properties would then be supposed to govern the use of words in conjecture in that they do, after all, stipulate acceptance in the circumstances. Moreover, this aspect of the use of words in conjecture would supposedly be governed by words' descriptive meanings, thus allowing fundamental acceptance properties to constitute such meanings. Pragmatic meaning could, at the same time, be constituted by what prescribes only weak or tentative acceptance in the circumstances.

However, intentional attitudes other than acceptance are not reducible to acceptance taken together with pragmatic considerations. Indeed, the intentional attitudes listed above have been chosen precisely because they need not involve acceptance and often exclude acceptance. Thus, there can be no question of reducing them to acceptance taken together with pragmatic considerations.

Conjecture, for example, is not merely tentative acceptance. This can be seen in that one may conjecture that some hypothesis is true, perhaps because it is better than all rival available hypotheses, and yet not accept that it is likely to be true. Yet, no matter how tentative one's acceptance of a proposition, one's acceptance is an acceptance that it is true.[3]

To consider another example, it is wrong to claim that flirtatiousness is reducible to acceptance and pragmatic considerations. If something is said by way of flirtation, then the conventions of flirtation govern its use. And if a person is following these rules, the issue of what he or she accepts, and of what he or she would say were she to accept, what

is merely said flirtatiously is beside the point. Thus, properties that specify conditions under which words apply to things do not govern the use of words in flirtation.

The above examples indicate that some of the so–called 'non–volitional' intentional states do not contain beliefs. They thus counter John Searle's claim that all intentional states contain a belief or a desire (1983, p. 36). At the same time, they leave open the possibility that many, and perhaps most, intentional attitudes can be explicated in terms of acceptance taken together with pragmatic considerations. The examples I have given are, however, all I need in order to make the point that an appeal to pragmatic meaning cannot save Horwich's position.

We should, in any case, worry that Horwich's view of meaning does not allow a principled distinction between descriptive and non–descriptive meaning. Horwich, recall, identifies the basic acceptance property of a word with the property that determines the conditions under which it is accepted that it applies to objects. In the same way, we may identify the basic conjecture property of a word with the property that determines the conditions under which it is used in raising conjectures about objects. More generally, we can associate an additional use property with a word for each intentional attitude that may be adopted towards the sentences in which it appears. Each such property will determine the conditions under which a corresponding intentional attitude is to be adopted towards these sentences. Now, both acceptance properties and properties associated with other intentional attitudes play an essential part in determining the overall use of words. What matter of fact, then, could make it the case that only acceptance properties constitute the descriptive meanings of words?

Horwich generally attempts to answer worries about which ‘use facts’ involving a word constitute the use of that word, and hence its meaning, through an appeal to the role of the fundamental acceptance property. Thus, Jerry Fodor and Ernest LePore argue that use theories of meaning imply the absurd conclusion that the meaning of a word is changed by any new discovery that leads to affirming a previously unaffirmed sentence in which the word is contained (1991). Horwich’s response is that the difference between

> those use properties which compromise what we call ‘the use’ and those which do not is simply the difference between the explanatorily basic use property and the rest (1998, p. 60).

So long, then, as the property that best explains the overall use of a word remains fixed – that is to say so long as the basic acceptance property of a word remains fixed – ‘the use’ of that word, and hence its meaning, is supposed to remain fixed. Thus, responding to a discovery by using a word to affirm a sentence that hitherto has not been affirmed does not, in itself, imply a change in the word’s meaning. Clearly, however, this strategy will not work where the issue is which use properties constitute a word’s descriptive meaning and which its pragmatic meaning. Even if it is granted that there are some aspects of a word’s use that are best explained by its basic acceptance property, it would beg the question to consider only what explains these aspects of its use as opposed to all aspects of its use, including those that are expressions of use properties that allegedly only contribute to pragmatic meaning.

Use Properties and Meanings

What should we conclude from the fact that the overall use of a word is governed not by its basic acceptance property but by a number of use properties? If one is inclined towards use theories of meaning, one might be tempted by the view that the use properties of a word collectively constitute its meaning. Indeed, why should meaning be expected to conform to the positivist bias towards verification and acceptance?

Nevertheless, if one accepts Horwich's commonsense criteria of adequacy for theories of meaning, an appeal to all the use properties of a word will not allow an adequate theory of meaning. One of Horwich's criteria tells us that a theory of meaning should capture the commonsense intuition that meanings are 'a species of entity to which words stand in the relation "x means y"' (1998, p. 46). A mere collection of use properties is not an entity, and so not, on this criterion, an appropriate candidate for the meaning of any word. But, perhaps the diverse use properties associated with a word collectively constitute an entity that can be identified with its meaning. One question, then, is whether these properties have the unity that is involved in their being constituents of the same entity. Another question is whether use properties alone suffice to confer this unity upon themselves. For if they do not, use properties alone will not suffice to constitute meanings.

The appropriate candidate for something that will confer the required unity on the use properties of a word is their common function: they all supposedly play a part in governing the use of a single word. In a similar way, the various dispositions of an army are dispositions of a single army partly in virtue of the fact that they fulfil some of the (numerically) identical military functions. But before we can say that a number of

dispositions fulfil an identical function, their manifestations must ultimately be coordinated by a single entity. And since use properties alone must confer the required unity, and hence function, on themselves, one use property must do so. Analogously, in the case of an army, what allows us to say that those of its dispositions that are embodied in its armoured corps and those of its dispositions that are embodied in its medical corps fulfil a common function, and so are the army's dispositions, is that their manifestations are ultimately coordinated by a single commander or command unit.

If a single use property is to coordinate the manifestations of other use properties with each other and with its own manifestations, then its being manifested, or its not being manifested, must play a part in determining when they will be manifested. Thus, for example, if the basic acceptance property of a word is to coordinate the manifestations of its basic conjecture property with its own manifestations and with the manifestations of its other use properties, the conditions that determine when the word is used in conjecture must include, among other things, the fact that its basic acceptance property is not manifested. This would imply that when, and only when, the word's basic acceptance property is not manifested, the manifestation of its basic conjecture property would be allowed. And if the manifestations of additional use properties of the word were similarly dependent upon its basic acceptance property being, or not being, manifested, its basic acceptance property would coordinate their manifestations as well.

However, no single use property coordinates the manifestations of all others. In order to see this, it suffices to see that there is one use property the manifestation of which is not generally determined, even in part, by the manifestation or otherwise of any other use property. The basic acceptance property will do. The circumstances in which it is

accepted that a word applies to something are those in which appropriate evidence is available. But the evidence for accepting some sentence does not generally consist, partly or wholly, in the fact that some other intentional attitude has, or has not, been adopted towards it. Thus, it does not consist, even in part, in manifesting, or not manifesting, other use properties.

Notice that the fact that the same evidence plays a part in determining both that a certain sentence is accepted and that it is not used in conjecture implies only that the evidence in question plays a part in coordinating the manifestations of a basic acceptance property and a basic conjecture property. It does not imply that one of these properties coordinates the manifestations of the other.

I conclude that, since a word's use properties do not include a property that coordinates their manifestations, they do not confer upon themselves the kind of unity that would allow us to say of them that they fulfil the function of governing the use of that word. But this, recall, is what is required of the use properties of a word if they are to constitute an entity that can be identified with its meaning. If, then, we insist that each meaning a word has is a single entity, we will have to look elsewhere for what constitutes meanings.

Meaning and the Coordination of Use

Since the manifestations of a word's use properties are in fact coordinated, it is natural to think of its meaning as what is, in part, responsible for their coordination. Moreover, if meanings are thus responsible, they will have to play a part in determining which use properties words have. The meaning of a word will, for example, have to play a part in

determining that it does not have a number of use properties the simultaneous manifestations of which are often required by circumstances, but which would involve the adoption of incompatible intentional attitudes. Thus, it is natural to suppose that meanings are, in part, responsible both for the coordination of the manifestations of use properties, and for which use properties words have. This conclusion boils down to the observation that our being disposed to use words as we do is, pretheoretically, supposed to be explained by the meanings of words taken together with a variety of other factors, including, among other things, our aims and individual characteristics. For example, we will often explain a cautious person's disposition merely to conjecture that a certain word applies, where another accepts that it applies, partly by reference to her being cautious and partly by reference to the meaning of the word. Thus, we suppose that the meanings of words play a part in coordinating, and hence in explaining, our dispositions to use words in the ways we do. They cannot, then, be supposed to be constituted by such dispositions.

Further, since the meaning of a word supposedly plays a part in explaining which use properties it has, it is tempting to identify its meaning with the mental state that is expressed by that word. Pretheoretically, it seems that we are disposed to use a given word as we do because we use it to express a given idea. Horwich too claims that his thesis is compatible with the view that meanings are mental states. Indeed, he claims that there is no important difference between his use theory and

> ‘functionalist’ accounts according to which each mental element is identified as that which plays a certain causal role, and the meaning of a term is then identified with the element it expresses (1998, pp. 98–9).

However, we can now see that Horwich’s use theory picks out the wrong mental elements. Since commonsense has it that meanings explain why words have the use properties they have, use properties and anything they constitute do not play the causal role that commonsense ascribes to meanings.

Conclusion

I have aimed to establish that if we insist on commonsense criteria of adequacy, we can suppose neither that meanings are constituted by acceptance properties nor by use properties in general. The same, of course, is true of the more orthodox Wittgensteinian identification of meaning with actual use. If we insist that meaning is to explain use, meaning cannot be supposed to be constituted by use. This is not to say that theories of meaning that suppose meaning to be constituted by use, or by use properties, are in trouble. It is premature to draw any conclusions regarding the nature of meaning. As I suggested briefly at the beginning of this paper, it is premature to endorse commonsense criteria of adequacy on theories of meaning.

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Endnotes

[1] Horwich does not identify the meaning property of a word, w, with its basic acceptance property, A(x), because "there could be another word, v, whose basic acceptance property is 'A(x) and B(x)' [so that such an identification] would compel us to conclude, wrongly, that since *w* and *v* both have A(x), v means the same as w" (1998, p. 58, n. 5).

[2] Unless explicitly stated otherwise, 'use' and 'meaning' should, in the present paper, be understood to refer to descriptive use and descriptive meaning respectively.

[3] Bas van Fraassen distinguishes between accepting and believing theories. According to him, accepting a theory only involves believing its empirical consequences (1980). If this is correct, accepting a proposition need not imply accepting that it is true. Horwich, however, is clearly using 'accepts' to mean 'believes'. Indeed, he thinks that van Fraassen's distinction makes no sense (1991). In any case, conjecture cannot be equated with what van Fraassen calls acceptance since raising a theory in conjecture does not require believing its empirical consequences.

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