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Words have various properties which seem changeable. Take pronunciation and meaning, for example. When *vrai* travelled from French to English it was soon pronounced as *very* but continued to mean something like *true*, as in a *very knight* (Hollmann 2009). The word has long since shed its semantic connection to truth, at least in English. But it is very true, as Mark Richard points out in this insightful work, that philosophers of language have tended to neglect - or have Quinean misgivings about - the topic of meaning change. The book is a welcome effort in fixing this.

Richard argues that meanings, whatever they are, should be understood by analogy with biological species. Certainly, he admits, there is controversy in the biological sciences and philosophy of biology about the nature of species. Yet there is a list of plausible proposals about how species should be defined and individuated and the notion itself seems to be in good standing; it is employed in good faith by biologists in the development of theories, models, and explanations. Richard is hopeful that meanings are no worse off. According to him, the meaning of a simple expression is a set of presuppositions shared by a group of competent speakers. To know the meaning, then, speakers must have a specific set of presuppositions which is common ground in the group and should be exploited in interpreting utterances of expressions whose meaning it is. This is the expressions' 'interpretive common ground' or ICG.

This is not Stalnaker's common ground, or not quite. To presuppose something is not necessarily to believe it, but to be disposed to act as if one believed it for certain purposes. We often presuppose something in this sense for the purposes of conversation; I may for instance allow my friend to believe falsely that we are in agreement when discussing politics.

Competence with some expression thus requires the speaker to presuppose, when using it, some requisite set of propositions, constituting the expression's ICG. In Richard's example, competent use of the word *cousin* in English presupposes the proposition *that cousins are parents' siblings' progeny*, because this proposition is part of *cousin's* ICG. Call this proposition PSP. But this only requires speakers to behave as if they believed PSP in speaking or interpreting the speech of others and, so, young children and even nonhuman animals are allowed some degree of semantic competence.

Importantly, a set of propositions in some word's ICG is structured into first-order and higher-order facts and speakers can be competent even if they only presuppose the latter. It is a first-order fact about *cousin* in English that cousins are parents' siblings' progeny. This is first-order by being a fact about cousins, that is, what users of the word *cousin* are talking about. But Ruben, Richard reports, may adamantly hold that only males are cousins and still be a competent user. He is competent in virtue of presupposing a higher-order claim about cousins, that is, the claim that users of *cousin* expect their audience to recognize that in using the word they presuppose *that cousins are parents' siblings' progeny* (that is, PSP). That is to say, Ruben still presupposes, and acts as if, speakers of English expect addressees to recognize that users of *cousin* presuppose PSP. Ruben's idiosyncratic beliefs about cousins make it impossible for him to act as if cousins are parents' siblings' progeny, but he can still act as if *cousin* means exactly what others take it to mean.

ICG for some words may include certain illocutionary facts so that, for example, a slur like *Kike* could involve the presupposition that it expresses contempt for Jews. But using the word without expressing such contempt is not thereby a misuse, and to know its ICG is not thereby to become an anti-Semite. As Richard explains, one way to know the meaning is to

know, of some set of propositions, that it is the expression's ICG. The ICG, however, does not include any assumptions about reference or truth conditions, because such assumptions would be too indeterminate to help us to understand meaning or meaning attributions. Instead, Richard takes the interpretationist view that a speaker refers to an object in virtue of being well interpreted as doing so (p. 136). But he is also careful to point out that he does not intend this as an attack on standard compositional semantics, as compositional principles presumably do not change as easily as meanings or pronunciations, and can be studied fruitfully in isolation.

Leaving out details, this is the theory's core. I turn to spelling out its potential benefits. First, the notion of meanings as evolving bodies of information associated with lexical items is a perfect match for the analogy with species Richard is interested in. Extending this analogy a bit, one can think of referential semantics as conducive to a saltationist perspective on semantic change and Richard's alternative as more gradualist. That is to say, if expressions had different meanings by referring to distinct objects or properties, semantic change would tend to be relatively sudden and discontinuous. Or so one might think. Bodies of presupposed information will naturally expand or contract depending on the circumstances, providing etymologists with life-like stories of victories and defeats; *marriage* slowly embraced same sex unions. Similarly, the notion of a species is thought, by most, to capture a process or a set of objects scattered in both space and time. Species come into existence and go extinct but the time in between can be very long and involve a great deal of structural changes. So, if meanings evolve, their identity over time is similar to that of biological species.

Second, gradualism - to give the theory a name - affords a satisfying perspective on analyticity. The gradualist agrees with Quine that no statement is immune to revision, and any statement can be rejected without changing its meaning. Whether this was really Quine's view is a matter of debate, for he argues in one place that non-classical logicians merely 'change the subject' (Quine 1970, p. 81). Because meanings are gradually evolving entities, like species, any statement of meaning identity is relative to time and place and correspondingly vague at the boundaries. Analyticity is commonly thought of as truth in virtue of meaning and thus can only arise when meaning-determining facts are artificially fixed. Richard thus concedes that some stipulations and statements like 'a hunter is something that hunts' might be analytic but argues that this does not give analyticity any deep explanatory value, for example in theorizing about meaning or a priori knowledge. Still, the gradualist can fully understand ordinary thought and talk about sameness and difference of meaning, in virtue of the idea that meanings are sets of presuppositions in the ICG of a population of speakers at specific times. But ICG sets are not sets only of analytic or a priori statements. And strict sameness of meaning gets its purchase from considering 'only a very small time slice of a language' (p. 83 n. 41).

Finally, gradualism injects so-called conceptual engineering with a healthy dose of skepticism. Even if meanings change, as species evolve, they are not necessarily under our intentional control. Meanings as ICGs are supposed to be properties of public language expressions, which are not so easily domesticated, even if speakers can to some extent control what they mean by uttering such expressions on a given occasion. It is a standard assumption about intentional action that one cannot do *X* by *V*-ing if one believes that it is impossible to do *X* by *V*-ing. So, if I know that everyone will take me to mean *p* by uttering something, I cannot really form the intention to mean *q* instead. Consciously entertaining this intention in acting would be wishful thinking. First, I would need to change how my audience would understand this particular utterance in context. This is often difficult and, as Richard points out, not necessarily as effective in producing social change than a more basic ideological critique.

The analogy with species is a pillar of the gradualist picture, but it could do with some precisification. Richard writes that various linguistic and semantic entities - words, meanings,

concepts, languages, vocabularies, lexicons, and idiolects - are all like species or individuals of particular species. This is perhaps true, but tends to water down the analogy, making one think that anything with a history is like a species in the relevant sense, including houses, planets, newspapers, and friendships. It is helpful, therefore, when Richard explains that meanings are species-like when thought of as ensembles of mental structures embodied in individuals. It seems as though the structures must be word-meaning pairs, where meanings are thought of as, at least partly, presuppositions in the word's ICG. Basically, then, semantic individuals are encyclopaedic lexical entries in human minds. Species of such entries are determined by lexical coordination between individuals, just as some believe living organisms are part of the same species when their reproductive organs are functionally coordinated in a certain way. Two lexical entries, *x* and *y*, are coordinated in virtue of mutual expectations about interpretation, when I utter *x* it is reasonable to expect you to interpret *x* with *y*. My word *marriage* is reasonably interpreted using your word *marriage*, even if you think marriage between members of the same sex is impossible.

Still, Richard wants to insist that *meanings themselves* constitute a species (p. 100). But now this seems misleading. Presumably, different words in different natural languages can have the same ICG-based meaning without being related to a common ancestor. *Table* in English and *borð* in Icelandic are like this, let's say. But sometimes there clearly is a common ancestor, as in *door* and *dyr*. It seems to follow that the *table*-meaning is a single species realized in two different word-species, while the *door*-meaning is realized in one (or two species with a common ancestor). Similarly, we should be able to pick a natural property of living organisms, say, *being furry*, and say that it itself is a species which can be realized in individuals of different species (even when there is no common ancestor). But this seems to make a mess of things. As Richard points out, the 'species problem' has diachronic and synchronic aspects (p. 101). First, in virtue of what relation are two items existing at different times members of the same species? Second, in virtue of what relation are two items existing at the same time members of the same species? Meanings themselves are never lexically coordinated - to answer the synchronic question - unless the words bearing those meaning are coordinated. So there is no synchronic species-making relation for meanings themselves, only for word-meaning pairs. The same ICG-meaning can easily show up at different times without there being any non-trivial diachronic relation between the two occurrences. No answer to the diachronic question either.

I would offer the following reply on Richard's behalf. Meaning-determining mental states develop naturally in human beings in response to similar environments. So, two individuals will acquire roughly similar *table*-meanings simply in virtue of allowing their linguistic competences to develop naturally in normal interactions with other speakers or the non-linguistic environment. In this way, these meanings are diachronically related in virtue of developing naturally in organisms with a shared evolutionary history and ecology, giving rise to mental mechanisms and structures serving similar biological functions. True, the embodied ensembles of mental states constitutive of the *table*-meaning is never coordinated with others unless two idiolect-bound lexicalizations are coordinated, but this is just like two organisms having the capacity to breed but lacking, for the time being, a cognitive mechanism for identifying others as potential mates. The latter mechanism may take longer to develop, at least in some humans. Even so, it is hard to resist the conclusion that, despite Richard's title, meanings are not really like species, even if this is true of groups of potentially coordinated entries in the mental lexicons of speakers of the same species.

Another pillar of Richard's gradualism is presupposition. Despite decades of theorizing, I do not think we really know what presupposition consists in, although we now have a number of useful diagnostic tools (Beaver & Geurts 2014). Richard thinks that to presuppose *p* is to act as if one believes *p* and not necessarily to believe it. The gradualist needs this, I assume, for two reasons. First, Quine is taken to have shown that any apparent

change in meaning can be reduced to a mere change in belief. We now believe that same sex marriage is possible while before, perhaps, we thought it impossible. As-if belief (let's call it) has the definite advantage over belief that it is under our intentional control. Doxastic voluntarism is a more controversial position, however. This seems to make it easier, for the gradualist, to hold that sets of propositions in a word's ICG constitute the word's meaning, since the set's members only need to be as-if believed by the competent speaker. Changes in meaning reduce to changes in as-if beliefs, which is Quinean in spirit if not in letter.

The second reason is, it seems, that if various states or actions of young children and nonhuman animals are to be meaningful, we cannot require that those who are in meaningful states or those who perform meaningful actions have very sophisticated beliefs, only that they act as if they have those beliefs.

I do not think presupposing p consists in a state of acting as if one believes p . Normally, if I were to tell you that I'm picking my sister up at the airport, I would simply believe that I have a sister. Perhaps, also, my utterance somehow signals to you that I have a sister or that I believe so. If I were to tell you this without believing that I have a sister, merely acting as if I believed I had one, my utterance would manifest some degree of insincerity. But my insincerity is determined, or so many would think, by the relationship between what I say and my beliefs, in this case my belief that I do not have a sister. So, at least in this case, I presuppose p by acting as if I believe p while believing *not* p . If sincere, I presuppose p simply by believing p . Finally, is it possible to presuppose p while having neither of these two p -beliefs, that is, while neither believing that I have a sister nor believing that I do not have one? In Richard's example from before, if I neither agree nor disagree with my friend about politics, can I presuppose or act as if I agree? Admittedly, interpretationism may be liberal enough to predict that this is indeed possible; but why would my behavior be well interpreted in terms of the as-if belief that p when I neither believe p nor its negation? I do not think this is plausible when considered as an interpretation of mature competent speakers of the relevant language. But it may be plausible when it comes to young children and nonhuman animals, but perhaps this is merely because they mostly have as-if beliefs to go by anyway.

Presupposing p is believing p or some p -embedding proposition, even on the gradualist view. Otherwise the division of ICG-sets into first-order and higher-order facts is ill-conceived. Consider Ruben again. We are to suppose that Ruben's idiosyncratic views about cousins do not render him an incompetent user of *cousin*, because he still presupposes the higher-order part of the word's ICG. This means that Ruben acts as if English speakers expect addressees to recognize that those who use *cousin* act as if cousins are parents' siblings' progeny (PSP again). Normally, if someone is disposed to act as if others act as if PSP is true, they will believe something about how people who believe PSP are disposed to act. On the gradualist definition of presupposition (p. 66), to presuppose PSP is - skipping lots of other conditions - to act as someone who believes PSP would act. Accordingly, presupposing that others presuppose PSP is to act as if others act as if PSP is true. But what would it be for Ruben *merely* to presuppose this, rather than simply to believe it? As far as I can tell, this would be a distinction without a difference for someone like Ruben; he simply believes that others act as if PSP is true, and this explains his behaviour. The point is not that the presupposition in question would be impossible, only that, when the target is such a sophisticated state attributed to others (presupposing PSP), a belief-like attitude is a more plausible explanation.

A similar point applies to first-order presuppositions. The gradualist proposes that for S to presuppose p is, roughly, for S to be disposed to behave as if S believed p in situations where S has some particular purpose. For the purposes of conversation, perhaps, Ruben presupposes that cousins can be female. But how is this different from Ruben believing that others believe that cousins can be female? If he did not believe this then, presumably, he would believe that others agreed with him that cousins cannot be female, which would also

make mere as-if belief unmotivated. One possibility is that everyone privately believes that cousins cannot be female but acts as if they can. But this seems far-fetched. In summary, my suggestion is that as-if belief may be useful in theorizing about various organisms whose status as believers may be questionable and, furthermore, about particular classes of intelligent behaviour in competent speakers, where belief is merely dispositional, implicit, or insincerely expressed (the list is far from exhaustive). They are not at metasemantic bedrock. But Richard is anyway skeptical about such a bedrock (p. 139) and, if allowed his interpretationist spade, would surely dig deep holes into this paragraph.

Richard has interesting things to say about the analysis and engineering of concepts. He offers a neat argument from the premise that philosophers only argue from widely shared intuitions, to the conclusion that the target of analysis must be shared concepts, encoded by public language expressions rather than idiosyncratic items in individual idiolects. If two philosophers are arguing about knowledge, Richard writes,

[w]e all agree that if A's analysis of knowledge is correct and B's intuitions conflict with it, B's intuitions are messed up, even if they accurately reflect his idiosyncratic category of knowledge. (p. 54)

I want to suggest that this is a case of philosophical jargon messing with our minds. True, philosophers do not propose to use some judgment (or 'intuition') as a premise in an argument unless they believe the premise has already been accepted by others. True, also, that this implies that two people agreeing in their judgment agree on something; they are in some sense targeting some common thing. But it does not follow that they agree on shared concepts, or that they must be analyzing their shared concept, or that if they analyze their idiosyncratic concepts they do so *in lieu* of analyzing shared ones, this being what they really desire. In trying to discover what knowledge is, two theorists normally take themselves to be theorizing about the same thing, namely knowledge, and trying to discover facts which pertain to knowledge. Furthermore, if A believes that B does not accept the judgment that knowledge is F, then A will not use the judgment as a premise when arguing with B. But if A and B agree, so using it is in order.

Richard is certainly right to worry that A and B might be theorizing about two different things and that each is right about his or her respective target. I do not see, however, why the analyst who is right about the shared concept must have the correct theory, while the one who is merely right about the idiosyncratic concept must have the incorrect theory. This follows only if we assume, as a premise, that philosophical theory is aimed at discovering the truth about shared, public language concepts. But this is exactly not a shared judgment among philosophers, quite the contrary. Being right about the shared concept of knowledge might mean being wrong about knowledge, because common beliefs or presuppositions about knowledge are by and large false. So, being right about the idiosyncratic concept of knowledge could possibly mean being right about knowledge.

As already indicated, Richard makes some apt remarks on the topic of engineering. His major point seems to be that general ideological critique is much more powerful in effecting social change than trying to modify the meanings of individual words. He also suggests that the latter may be a tool of appeasement or, worse, hidden conservatism. Changing the way we talk may be new window dressing for business-as-usual. His major example is the history of the notion of marital rape. Apparently, if this retelling of the history is accurate, persuading people (better: men in power) that women should have the right to choose what to do with their own bodies was more effective than trying to make people use the word *rape* such that it applies to marital rape. As Richard acknowledges near the end, this does not amount to an objection to conceptual engineering as such. But, coupled with skepticism about our capacity to change public language meanings at will, it brings the

limitations of conceptual engineering into high relief. Within limits, Richard seems to think, engineering is possible and can sometimes have its intended effects.

Meanings as Species is a rich book, full of insights and ideas both stimulating and challenging. I have not been able to do it justice in this short review, although I have tried to describe its core thesis, raising some criticisms along the way. I recommend the book to anyone working on issues in the philosophy of language and mind, particularly if interested in the topic of semantic change.

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