

A Plea for Understanding

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1. Introduction.

The Philosophy of Language seeks ultimately to address two questions: What are the linguistic facts, and in particular the facts that determine what may be said on occasion by the use of language? And how are speakers in a position to exploit those facts? In a slogan, the first question requests a theory of meaning, the second a theory of understanding. As Michael Dummett has long advocated, a theory of meaning must engage properly with a theory of understanding so that the two questions ultimately receive an integrated answer.² However, historically, the second question has been recessive. My brief in this paper is to make a mild plea in its favour, through a preliminary exploration of some issues that arise when it is brought to prominence.

In the background are some large questions about the proper division of labour between the theory of meaning and the theory of understanding. Should we view linguistic understanding as a form of propositional knowledge of independently discernible meaning facts? Or is meaning more intimately related to understanding than that picture would require, so that facts about meaning are partly absorbed into, and so only accessible through, a theory of understanding? Indeed, is there even a separable question for the theory of meaning to address, or is understanding an achievement that makes no independently specifiable demands upon the facts?³ These are large questions, and I shall not attempt to foreground them here. But it is important to recognise that a satisfactory answer to our opening questions must engage with them.

I shall begin in §2 by distinguishing some varieties of understanding. §3 sketches an argument against the view that propositional knowledge suffices for

understanding. The aim is not simply to support that conclusion, but also to suggest that understanding is distinguished from other forms of epistemic standing by its dependence upon a specific form of integration of other types of epistemic standing. §4 marks a further distinction, between what I shall call *intake* and *uptake*. §5 discusses the prospects of two accounts of uptake, and suggests some desiderata on a unified account of intake and uptake. It is here that the large issues mentioned above loom closest to the surface. To reiterate, my aim here is not to provide detailed arguments for or against specific positions or desiderata, but rather to outline some central issues and to indicate some topics that I think are worthy of further reflection.

2. Some varieties of understanding.

Dummett distinguishes two senses of the verb 'to understand':

...that in which someone is said to understand a word, phrase or sentence, considered as a type, and that in which he may be said to understand a particular utterance. We may call these the 'dispositional' and the 'occurrent' senses of "to understand". (Dummett, 1993: 58)

Why is there a need to mark (or to keep track of) this distinction? Dummett offers two sorts of reasons. The first adverts to a distinction putatively amongst the objects of understanding. The second adverts to a distinction amongst modes of understanding.

We need an occurrent sense of "understand" for two reasons: indexicality and ambiguity.... If, for example, I hear someone say "There is a sinister smell here", how much do I need to know about where he is to know what statement he was making or what thought he was expressing, in that sense under which, if true, it is true absolutely? If someone utters an ambiguous sentence, his hearers may understand it in a particular way, whether as he intended or not; we may speak also, not only of how the speaker meant it, but of how he was understanding it. (1993: 60)

This first reason resides with a distinction between what a type of expression *means*—what the standing meaning of the expression type is—and what is *said* by the use of that expression—what thought is expressed by the use of the expression on an occasion. The second reason resides with a distinction between possession of a capacity to understand expression types or utterances and proper exercise of that capacity on particular occasions. Dummett focuses upon the latter reason in response to what he takes to be Wittgenstein’s refusal to acknowledge occurrent understanding:

...it is difficult to see how it can be maintained that no occurrent notion of understanding is required: for it is possible to be perplexed by a sentence on first hearing, through a failure to take in its structure, and to attain an understanding of it on reflection. (1993: 103)⁴

When the two types of reason are distinguished, the need for an at least four-way distinction emerges: (i) dispositional understanding of standing meaning; (ii) occurrent understanding of standing meaning; (iii) dispositional understanding of what is said in particular utterances; and (iv) occurrent understanding of what is said.

To see the need for (i)–(iv), consider attending to an utterance of the sentence type in (1):

(1) He is too intelligent to expect us to beat.

A typical response to an utterance of (1) would be blank incomprehension: absence of occurrent understanding even of the standing meaning of the sentence type employed. On reflection, however, one is able to ‘take in its structure, and to attain understanding’. To a good first approximation, the standing meaning of (1) is given in (2):

(2) A contextually determined male is too intelligent for one to expect a contextually specified group including the speaker to beat the contextually determined male.

Since this feature of (1) is accessible on reflection, it is plausible that one anyway had dispositional understanding of the sentence type. Clearly, occurrent understanding of the sentence type does not suffice for occurrent understanding of the utterance: for that, one needs to grasp what was said in the utterance, in the sense in which what was said determines truth-conditions.⁵ And for that, one would need to be in a position to ascertain (at least) the referents of 'he' and 'us'.⁶ In at least a thin sense, the fact that one would ordinarily be able to do this supports the appropriateness of attributing dispositional understanding of the utterance—i.e. a capacity to figure out what was said in the utterance. But one might hedge here if the transition from occurrent grasp of meaning to occurrent grasp of what is said required the acquisition of specific cognitive capacities—for instance, if, in order to grasp occurrently what the speaker said, one had to acquire a capacity to think about *him* through becoming perceptually acquainted with the male demonstrated by the speaker.⁷

A further distinction can be drawn at this point between the state that is the upshot of one's coming to understand a particular utterance, and the episodic achievement through which one enters that state. And 'occurrent understanding' is not entirely appropriate for use in application to the state rather than its onset, as witness the oddity of combination of 'occurrent' with other verbs for states, as in 'occurrent knowledge', 'occurrent belief', etc.⁸ However, emphasis on the distinction between states and episodes can be suppressed in the present context. What matters here is the distinction between a mere capacity to understand on occasion and the upshots of proper exercise of that capacity on an occasion, whatever the specific temporal profile of the latter.⁹

I propose in the remainder to focus upon occurrent understanding, or grasp, of what is said. And I shall prescind, as far as is practicable, from consideration of constitutive connections amongst the four categories, except those that arise due to occurrent understanding involving the exercise of dispositional understanding. We will thus be attending to phenomena at the interface between understanding language and understanding the users of language whilst attempting to ignore issues that arise on either side of the interface.

3. Understanding and knowledge.

Understanding what someone has said, in the occurrent sense, ordinarily helps to put one in a position to know that someone has produced a particular utterance and thereby said, with one or another type of force, that such-and-such. For instance, understanding what someone, say Florence, has said by use of (1), where the speaker used 'he' to refer to the World Chess Champion for 2008, might help to put one in a position to know that (3) or that (4):

(3) Florence produced an utterance of (1) and thereby asserted that Viswanathan is too intelligent for one to expect us to beat him (Viswanathan).

(4) Florence produced an utterance of (1) and thereby asked whether Viswanathan is too intelligent for one to expect us to beat him (Viswanathan).

The thin use of saying involved here can be understood as a sort of determinable of each of the determinate forces with which an utterance can be produced. It corresponds with what one might know if one knew that Florence had expressed the thought that Viswanathan is disqualified but did not know whether she had asserted that Viswanathan is disqualified, asked whether he is, ordered, or optated that he be. I shall ignore issues arising from our grasp of the forces of utterances and focus on our engagement with facts like that stated in (5), with 'said' understood in the thin way.

(5) Florence produced an utterance of (1) and thereby said that Viswanathan is too intelligent for one to expect us to beat him (Viswanathan).

In what, then, does one's understanding of Florence's utterance consist? An immediate hypothesis is that one's understanding is one's knowing that (5), or

something similar. The immediate hypothesis has the advantage that it involves only minimal departure from what would ordinarily be the case were one to understand Florence's utterance. But it suffers from numerous disadvantages.

The hypothesis can be understood in at least three ways. First, it can be understood as embodying the claim that one's understanding of an utterance is a *simple* matter of one's knowing what was said in that utterance and so is neutral with respect to any more specific account of how one knows what was said. Second, it can be understood as embodying the claim that one's understanding of an utterance is a *brutal* matter of one's knowing what was said in that utterance and so requires that there is no more specific account of how one knows what was said. Third, it can be understood as embodying the claim that one's understanding of an utterance is an *unspecified* matter of one's knowing in a particular way what was said.

The *unspecified* understanding of the hypothesis, with its uncomfortable conjunction of acceptance of the possibility of further specification with refusal to supply it, can be rejected immediately in the present context. Reasons for rejecting the *simple* and *brutal* understandings are a little less straightforward. To a first approximation, both should be rejected due to their respective failures appropriately to distinguish understanding from other forms or ways of knowing, either through failing to mark understanding off from other forms or ways of knowing, or through marking understanding off in a way that renders its standing mysterious. I shall begin to explain those failings by considering the hypothesis that understanding is a *simple* matter of knowing what was said.

Seeing things can put one in a position to have propositional knowledge about those things. And we think of seeing things as a specific way in which one can be put in a position to know about those things, a way distinct from being put in a position to know through understanding. The point is not (yet) that an account of understanding must underwrite special treatment of understanding; but rather, that the account of understanding must not disrupt special treatment of other cases. Yet the *simple* understanding of the hypothesis is consistent with cases of knowledge through sensory perception—for instance, seeing that the game has begun or hearing that the clock has stopped—also being cases of understanding. Hence, the *simple* understanding of the hypothesis fails

appropriately to distinguish understanding from other ways we have of being (or coming to be) in a position to know.

One response at this point would be to reject the complaint as premised on a failure to exploit all of the resources available to the defender of the *simple* hypothesis. The hypothesis is, not simply that understanding of an utterance may be any form of propositional knowledge about it, but also, more specifically, that it is a matter of being in a position to have propositional knowledge of what was said in the utterance. And, the response continues, the special nature of the objects of understanding, that they are facts concerning what was said, forces the required distinction amongst our ways of being put in a position to know. For the involvement of what is not sense perceptible—i.e. content—in what was said means that one cannot in other specific ways—i.e. by seeing, hearing, etc.—come by knowledge concerning what was said. As Tyler Burge puts it,

We do not perceive the contents of attitudes that are conveyed to us; we understand them. We perceive and have perceptual beliefs about word occurrences. We may perceive them as having a certain content and subject matter, but the content is understood, not perceived. (Burge, 1993: 478)

There is room for discussion at this point concerning the understanding of the bounds of the (sense-) perceptible required by the envisaged defence of the *simple* understanding of the hypothesis. In particular, those who wish to employ the defence and who also wish to endorse a view of sense perceptions as bearers of propositional content will have work to do in ensuring a difference in the modes of engagement with content involved in perception and understanding that would make appropriate Burge's differential attitude. And it is not obvious that making out the required distinction would not require going beyond the *simple* hypothesis. But a more immediate problem with the envisaged defence of the *simple* hypothesis is that, rather than evading the need further to specify the nature of understanding, it positively invites further specification. For the distinction with sense perception relies, not upon the impossibility of sensory engagement with content, but rather upon the impossibility of engagement

through understanding with the proper objects of sense. And making out that impossibility would seem to require a substantive account of understanding.

The *brutal* understanding of the hypothesis has the resources to distinguish understanding from knowledge got through sense perception. On its *brutal* understanding, the hypothesis provides a negative specification of the way of coming to know characteristic of understanding, according to which there is no more specific characterisation of the way of coming to know that constitutes understanding. On this view, what distinguishes being in a position to know on the basis of seeing, hearing, etc., from being in a position to know as a matter of understanding is that in the former cases, by contrast with the latter, it is possible further to specify the way in which one knows. By contrast with cases of knowledge got through seeing, hearing, etc., a complete answer to the question, how one knows what was said in that utterance—where the question presupposes that we have an exhaustive answer to all sub-questions pertaining to perceptual sources, for instance the question of how you were in a position to know about *that* utterance rather than *this* one—might be: ‘One just does’.

Although it is plausible that the *brutal* hypothesis can underwrite a distinction between understanding and sense-perceptual sources of epistemic position, it appears unable to register a distinction between understanding and other sources. At least that is so on the plausible view that with respect to at least certain basic pieces of one’s *a priori* knowledge, there is no articulate answer to the question of how one knows them.¹⁰ On that view of basic *a priori* knowledge, the *brutal* hypothesis fails to acknowledge a genuine distinction, by classifying understanding together with any way of having non-perceptual knowledge—or, at least, with all ways of having such knowledge for which no articulate characterisation is available. And the immediate corollary of that failure is apt to appear even more pressing. By classifying understanding together with basic *a priori* knowledge, it treats understanding as a way of having such knowledge. And that will seem to many to count decisively against the hypothesis.

The consequence will seem decisive against the brutal hypothesis to many theorists, though not to all. For one prominent example, Burge is rendered immune to the present charge because he anyway holds that, in at least some

cases, our knowledge of what was said is *a priori*. More carefully, Burge holds that, if we hive off the distinctive contribution of sense-perception in coming to know what was said, by viewing it as a mere trigger to the operations of the intellectual faculty involved in appropriately entertaining the content of what was said, then we can view the source of our knowledge as the proper operation of the intellectual faculty itself. And it is reasonable in that case to group knowledge gained via understanding together with other cases of knowledge got by intellection, and so to view understanding as a source of, or way of having, *a priori* knowledge.¹¹

I've argued elsewhere that Burge's view of understanding should not be accepted, at least in full generality, and that it should be rejected, in particular, for a range of core cases in which understanding puts one in a position to acquire knowledge from an interlocutor. The basic difficulty it faces is that, in the core cases, understanding is implicated in making available, not only an expressed content, but also its having been expressed through an episode of the production of speech by a particular agent. It is this function of understanding that puts one in a position to know who said what and to know vicariously on the basis of testimony obtained from particular sources. That function, I've argued, requires the integrated exercise of intellectual faculties and sense perceptual faculties so that the form of understanding involved does not in any straightforward way give rise to *a priori* knowledge of what is said.¹² However, even if we accept Burge's account, there is a more immediate difficulty. Although Burge's account is able to underwrite the possibility of *a priori* knowledge got through understanding, it is unable—at least in the context of brutalism about basic *a priori* knowledge—to rule out the possibility that *every* piece of basic *a priori* knowledge is got through understanding.

It might be thought that, if the account of understanding that I proposed in place of Burge's is accepted, it might supply resources to distinguish understanding from other forms or ways of knowing. According to the alternative view, core cases of understanding are the upshot of, or participate in the upshot of, integrated operations of sense-perceptual and intellectual faculties. On the basis of that account, it might be suggested that what is special about understanding is just that it is the upshot of both sense perception and

intellection. Although such an account would go beyond the simple identification of understanding with knowing what was said, it would do so by drawing only on specifications anyway implicated in characterising its component achievements.

Second thoughts serve to scotch the suggestion. Although the proposed account is able to distinguish understanding from the upshots of sense perception or intellection, it is unable, without supplementation, to distinguish it from other cases of knowledge got through both. For one example, it appears unable, absent supplementation, to distinguish understanding from ordinary cases of knowing on the basis of sense perception, where this involves the application of concepts—so intellection—to the deliverances of the senses. For another example, it appears unable, without further ado, to distinguish understanding from *a posteriori* knowledge of necessities, where such knowledge is the upshot of integrated operations—in typical cases, inferentially integrated operations—of intellection and perception.

The discussion to this point has been premised on the assumption that basic *a priori* knowledge is not subject to further specification. Perhaps that assumption is the villain. Let's suppose, then, that basic *a priori* knowledge is subject to further specification—perhaps, for example, as knowledge got through intellection or reflection. Obviously, the supposition is subject to its own explanatory demands, in particular the demand for an account of the powers of intellection and reflection. But even supposing those demands discharged, the consequent account of *a priori* knowledge would be unable to save the *brutal* hypothesis. Understanding would be not only special, by virtue of its simple distinction from other forms or ways of knowing, but also an oddity, by virtue of the manner of that distinction. It would be the only form or way of knowing not subject to further specification. And the mystery occasioned by that special standing is deepened by the observation that it would be a brutal way of knowing time-bound contingencies, e.g. concerning who said what, and when. By far the most natural view at this point is that no obvious version of the hypothesis that understanding of an utterance is knowledge of what was said in that utterance should be accepted. Rather, if understanding is a form or way of knowing, then it is a specific form or way of knowing.

The conclusion to this point is supported by an observation of Christopher Peacocke's. Peacocke observes that it is possible to know what someone has said in a particular utterance without understanding their utterance. For instance, someone in the know might tell you that, in producing a particular utterance, Florence said that Viswanathan is disqualified. Supposing appropriate conditions are met, it is possible to acquire knowledge from such testimony. Hence, one might acquire knowledge that Florence said that Viswanathan is disqualified on the basis of testimony, so independently of one's understanding Florence's utterance to that effect.¹³ A similar result can be achieved by considering the difference between merely coming to know, through being told, that an utterance of (1) says that (2) and coming, perhaps through engagement with (2), simply to understand an utterance of (1). In addition to supplying immediate support to the conclusion that understanding is not simply knowledge of what was said, Peacocke's observation bolsters an intervening step in the argument. For it indicates that understanding is not distinguished from other forms of knowledge simply by virtue of being knowledge specifically of what was said. And it suggests that if understanding is a form or way of knowing what was said, then it is a peculiarly immediate form or way.

4. Intake and uptake.

A natural hypothesis at this point would be that understanding is a specific form of propositional knowledge, or a determinate way of having the determinable, propositional knowledge, akin to other specific forms, or ways of having, propositional knowledge, e.g. seeing that such-and-such and remembering that such-and-such. However, pursuit of the comparison with other specific forms, or ways, of knowing suggests an alternative hypothesis.

Consider seeing that the game has started. If we accept that this is a specific form, or way, of knowing that the game has started—in particular, that it is a different form, or way, of knowing from hearing that, or remembering that, the game has started—then it is pressing to say in what its specificity lies. And an obvious answer would be that seeing that the game has started is a matter of knowing, *by seeing*, that the game has started.¹⁴ By parity, then, one would

naturally predict that, if understanding is a specific form of knowing, then it is a matter of knowing *by understanding*. And if one understood the characterisation of the specific forms of knowing involved here as going via appeal to an episodic basis for the acquisition of knowledge—for example, an episode of seeing the game start, or of understanding Florence’s utterance—then it might appear natural to view the understanding of an utterance, not as the output of an epistemic achievement, but rather as its episodic input.

The suggested understanding of the structure of specific forms of knowledge is not immediately forced. For one might view the ‘know by ϕ -ing’ specification as indicating involvement of a specific epistemic capacity, rather than specific input to a general epistemic capacity. For present purposes, we needn’t attempt to decide the issue between the two understandings, for there is reason to think that, whatever its precise role in determining epistemic standing, exercises of dispositional understanding can leave a mark in consciousness independent of the achievement of epistemic standing. And it would then be natural to view those episodes as cases of understanding.

A reason to think that exercises of dispositional understanding can make a psychological difference independent of the achievement of epistemic standing is provided by the possibility of rational withholding of belief about what is said consistent with exercise of understanding otherwise suitable to underwrite knowledge of what is said.¹⁵ The structure of the case is similar to an analogous case for seeing. In that case, we begin with a situation in which one sees that such-and-such, for instance a situation in which one sees that a chess piece is black. In that situation, one knows by seeing that the chess piece is black. Since knowing that the chess piece is black entails believing that the chess piece is black—at least *modulo* the subject’s rationality and their ability to believe that the chess piece is black—one believes that the chess piece is black. But one might be in almost precisely the same position with respect to one’s perceptual and epistemic standing towards the chess piece whilst withholding belief that the chess piece is black. If one has apparently good reasons for withholding belief—perhaps one has, or appears to have, good reason for thinking that one is undergoing a brain manipulation that would make only red chess pieces appear black to one—then one’s withholding belief might be rationally permissible.

Hence, one might rationally withhold belief and, so, fail to know that the chess piece is black. Plausibly, one might nonetheless see the chess piece, and the chess piece's colour. More generally, the upshot of exercise of one's seeing capacity might have the same potential to determine one's epistemic standing as such an upshot would have in a healthy doxastic environment. For instance, if the apparent reason for withholding belief were extinguished, then—*ceteris paribus*—it is plausible that one would be in a position to know that the chess piece is black.

In the case of understanding, we can begin with a situation in which one knows on the basis of understanding that Florence has said that the game has started. In this case, it appears plausible that one might in almost precisely the same way undergo an exercise of one's capacity to understand in a context in which one rationally withholds belief from the proposition that Florence has said that the game has started. One might still take in Florence's saying that the game has started even if apparently reasonable doubts about brain manipulation prevented one from making epistemic use of what one took in. More generally, one might be in a position such that, if one's apparent reasons for withholding belief were extinguished, then—*ceteris paribus*—one would be in a position to know that Florence had said that the game has started.¹⁶

I suggested that, given the distinction between the non-epistemic upshot of exercise of a capacity to understand and knowledge attained on the basis of that exercise, it would be natural to identify understanding with the upshot rather than the knowledge. But the distinction between upshot and knowledge does not dictate adoption of that position on the location of understanding. Given the distinction, a question arises as to the function of knowledge—and, in particular, the belief requirement on knowledge—given that apparently one can take in elements of one's environment in its absence. And a plausible answer to that question—an answer given credence by reflection on what is lacking in a subject who mistakenly withholds belief in what they take in—is that knowledge of a fact is what allows one to exploit that fact—to have that fact serve as a reason for one—in one's theoretical and practical reasoning. On that view, what is missing, when one withholds what would otherwise be reasonable belief about what one takes in, is a capacity to have one's practical and theoretical position

controlled by how things are.¹⁷ If that is right, then exercises of a capacity to understand that do not result in knowledge, like exercises of a capacity to see a black chess piece's colour that do not result in seeing that the chess piece is black, might be thought to involve a form of cognitive blindness.¹⁸ And we might then rather identify understanding with a specific form of openness to the facts about what has been said, rather than with the type of input that determines its specific form.

Again, we are not required for present purposes to take a stand on the precise location of understanding. We have seen grounds for requiring, of an account of understanding, that it give accounts both of the episodes by which one takes in what is said—what I shall refer to as an account of *intake* understanding—and also of the form of openness to what one thereby takes in that enables one to exploit facts about what is said in one's theoretical and practical reasoning—what I shall refer to as an account of *uptake* understanding. I shall turn, in the next section, to the question of the form of uptake understanding, in the hope that addressing that question might provide clues as to the further specification of intake.

5. Uptake and knowledge of truth-conditions.

If openness to what one takes in through understanding is a matter of understanding that such-and-such, in the way that openness to what one takes in through seeing is a matter of seeing that such-and-such, then it is too amorphous a subject matter to warrant focussed attention. For one can see that a chess piece is black without seeing the chess piece's colour, for instance by seeing the colours of the other chess pieces in a set. And one can understand that Florence said, in a demonstrated utterance, that the game has started without understanding an utterance of Florence's to the effect that the game has started, for instance by understanding testimony from someone other than Florence. What is required is a restriction to the epistemic positions one can occupy just through exercise of one's capacity to understand. Put another way, what is wanted is an account of epistemic standing that would be (with appropriate modal qualification) both necessary and sufficient for uptake.

The requirement for an account of epistemic standing that would be both necessary and sufficient for uptake has obvious affinities with a requirement of Donald Davidson's, according to which a theory of meaning for a particular language should 'explicitly state something knowledge of which would suffice for interpreting utterances of speakers of the language to which it applies' (Davidson, 1976: 171). There are two relevant differences between Davidson's formulation and ours. First, Davidson seeks an account of facts, or truths, that are exploited by those who understand utterances, rather than an account of the way(s) in which those facts, or truths, are exploited. That provides sufficient grounds for Davidson's decision not to join us in requiring an account of knowledge that is necessary for openness to what one understands, grounds that Davidson seeks to bolster through general scepticism concerning the probity of the more demanding aim.¹⁹ Second, and related, Davidson seeks to provide sufficient conditions for being in a position to interpret (his version of uptake) through a statement of the facts, or truths, knowledge of which would sustain ability to interpret. By contrast, our formulation leaves open whether Davidson's aim is, in full generality, sustainable, by allowing that understanding might depend upon something other than propositional (i.e. stateable) knowledge.²⁰

Davidson's proposal for meeting his requirement is that knowledge of the output theorem of an interpretative truth theory that applies to an utterance, together with knowledge that it was a theorem of such a truth theory, would suffice for uptake of that utterance.²¹ Let's begin by considering whether Davidson's proposal can be transposed into an answer to our question about uptake. So understood, it becomes the hypothesis that the knowledge involved in Davidson's proposal is both necessary and sufficient for uptake. For example, uptake of Florence's utterance of (6) would be a matter of knowing that (7), as the theorematic element of an interpretative truth theory covering Florence's utterance, *u*.

(6) Viswanathan will win.

(7) *u* is true iff Viswanathan will win.

From the perspective of our requirement, the hypothesis has two main benefits but suffers from at least one critical flaw.

The first main benefit is that the hypothesis sustains an attractive requirement that I shall call the *transparency* of understanding. In discussing the logical status of supposition, Dummett notes that it is not logically an imperative for, he observes,

I could, having said, 'Think of a number', ask 'Have you done so yet?', but it would be a joke if I asked that question having said, 'Suppose the witness is telling the truth'. (Dummett, 1973: 309)²²

As is appropriate, Dummett doesn't explain the joke. One obvious source of humour is the inappropriate form of the verb. In order for supposition to be something one could do, so something one could be ordered to do, it would need to be able to stand for the outcome of a specified process. And that would require the verb 'suppose' to take (distinctive²³) progressive form, contrary to fact.²⁴ But a second potential source is brought out more clearly by the imperative, 'Entertain the thought that the witness is telling the truth'.²⁵ The second source is that one can't understand the order to entertain the thought, or idly to suppose, without complying thereby with its demand. The transparency of understanding is responsible for the latter effect, whereby one cannot in general understand an utterance without entertaining a thought that it is used to express. More carefully, the transparency of understanding is the requirement that one who has uptake of the expression of a particular thought is thereby in a position to treat reasons for or against accepting the thought itself as reasons for or against endorsing the thought registered through understanding. For instance, according to transparency, one who has uptake of the expression of the thought that Viswanathan will win is in a position to treat reasons for denying that Viswanathan will win as reasons for denying what they understand as having been expressed. In that way, what is immediately before one's mind, by virtue of one's understanding of an utterance, is the (putative) subject matter determined by the thought, rather than, for example, the thought itself being the immediate object of one's thinking.

The transparency requirement is closely connected with John McDowell's observation that our most basic engagements with what speakers say are ways of acquiring information about the subject matter of what they say rather than about what the speakers have said or believe.²⁶ It is weaker than the requirement that all thoughts be transparently communicable, so that for any thought of any thinker, it is possible for another thinker to entertain that thought. The latter requirement faces obvious difficulties arising from the special natures of certain indexical thoughts.²⁷ And it may be that similar difficulties afflict the less demanding requirement for transparency of understanding. In that case, or on other grounds, one might consider a further weakening to the requirement that understanding the expression of a thought with subject matter *P* involves entertaining a thought with subject matter *P*.²⁸ Further wrinkles might then involve specification of additional conditions on the relation between expression and entertaining. The requirement obviously warrants further articulation and defence, but its provisional endorsement will be harmless in the present, exploratory context.

The hypothesis derived from Davidson's proposal sustains transparency in the following way. We have it that Florence said that Viswanathan will win and so gave expression to the thought that Viswanathan will win. Hence, according to transparency, understanding Florence's utterance must involve entertaining the thought that Viswanathan will win. The required result is secured by the hypothesis because one cannot know that (7) without entertaining (7), and so without entertaining a thought of its right hand side, to the effect that Viswanathan will win.²⁹

A first obvious alternative to the present hypothesis is that uptake is a matter of knowing what was said in an utterance—for instance, that uptake of what Florence said in *u* is a matter of knowing that what Florence said in *u* was that Viswanathan will win. Knowing *that* is a matter of knowing *which* thought Florence expressed rather than a matter of entertaining the thought she expressed. To see the difference, and also an aspect of its importance, consider that it is consistent with knowing that Florence has said that Viswanathan will win that one should fail to think in accord with the truth conditions of what Florence said. For instance, it is consistent with an inability to take reasons for

thinking that Viswanathan did not win as reasons for thinking that what one took Florence to have said is false. Indeed, it is consistent with apparently rational refusal to treat what Florence said as having truth-conditions, for one might have apparent grounds for endorsing a view of expressed thoughts according to which they do not.³⁰ Notice that, if the possibility of this type of block on the appreciation of reasons marks off knowledge of what was said from understanding proper, then it would provide an at least partial explanation for Peacocke's observation that one can know what was said without understanding. The partial explanation would be that mere knowledge, unlike understanding, fails the transparency requirement. Anyway, if we assume the transparency requirement, then the present hypothesis has a key advantage over the first obvious alternative.

A second, related, benefit of the hypothesis is that it ensures what I shall call *appreciation of the expressive connection* between an utterance and the thought one understands it to express. Appreciation of expressive connection is a matter of appreciating that reasons for or against what one understands to have been expressed are reasons for or against the acceptability of the utterance in which it was expressed. Appreciation is sustained by the hypothesis because if one derives knowledge of (7) from knowledge of an interpretative truth-theory covering *u*, then one is in a position to know that the truth-value of *u* is coeval with the truth-value of the thought that one entertains on the basis of understanding. One is therefore in a position to derive reasons to take *u* to be true (/false) from reasons to believe (/deny) that Viswanathan will win and *vice versa*.³¹ In this case, there is room for a gap to open up, on the hypothesis, between uptake and its derivational exploitation, for someone might know (7) as a theorem of an interpretative truth-theory and yet have apparent grounds for rejecting the derivability of coeval status for its right and left hand sides, due perhaps to an idiosyncratic understanding of the bi-conditional.³² Following the earlier suggestion about Peacocke's observation, the gap here might help to explain why testimonial knowledge of truth-conditions appears not to suffice for understanding. But perhaps it could be argued that someone with an idiosyncratic conception of the bi-conditional would nonetheless be in a position

to appreciate an expressive connection between utterance and condition, despite their not being in a position properly to exploit what they appreciate.

On the assumption that transparency is to be respected, a second obvious alternative to the present hypothesis is a view according to which uptake of what is said in an utterance is a matter simply of entertaining an expressed thought, without entertaining the thought on the basis of knowing a truth-theorem for the utterance. Such a view would obviously preserve transparency, but at a cost. For someone might entertain the thought expressed in an utterance without, so to speak, appreciating it as having been expressed in the utterance. In particular, one who entertained the thought expressed in an utterance might fail to occupy an epistemic position in which reasons to reject the expressed thought are available to them as reasons to reject the utterance.³³ Hence, the hypothesis has a key advantage over the second obvious alternative.

Although the hypothesis has important advantages over the two obvious alternatives that we have considered, it also suffers from a critical flaw.³⁴ The flaw can be presented as a dilemma.

The first horn of the dilemma arises from the demands that the hypothesis imposes upon uptake. In the first place, the hypothesis secures transparency only by securing more than transparency appears to demand. In order to entertain the content expressed by an utterance, the proposal requires that subjects entertain a richer content, embedding a concept of truth. And it might reasonably be denied that it is a necessary condition on a subject's having uptake that they have, or are required to exercise in uptake, facility with a concept of truth.³⁵ Moreover, in the second place, the proposal, as presented, is yet more demanding on subjects, since it requires subjects to appreciate that the truth-theorems that they apply to particular utterances are elements in an interpretative truth-theory. Again, it might reasonably be doubted that uptake in general depends upon the sort of reflective assurance provided by knowledge of the interpretative status of a truth-theorem applying to a particular utterance.³⁶ The first horn of the dilemma, then, is the claim that, as presented, the proposal is implausibly demanding of the capacities, and exercises of capacities, involved in uptake.

On the second horn of the dilemma is the claim that the features of the hypothesis found problematic on the first horn are not optional. Obviously, the core component of the proposal, that transparency and appreciation of expressive connection involve knowledge of truth-theorems, cannot be shorn of its apparently extraneous element, that it makes uptake depend upon exercise of a concept of truth. And the hypothesis secures appreciation of expressive connection only by requiring, not only that subjects know truth-theorems applying to particular utterances, but also that they know that the theorems are elements in an interpretative truth-theory. Someone who knew only the bi-conditional theorems, without also knowing their pedigree, would not be in a position to treat reasons for rejecting (/accepting) one side of a theorem as reasons for rejecting (/accepting) the other. For example, someone in that position might view reasons for rejecting either side of the bi-conditional as reasons for rejecting the bi-conditional itself.³⁷ The second horn of the dilemma, then, involves a version of John Foster's infamous objection to Davidson's proposal, according to which knowledge of what is in fact an interpretative truth-theorem covering an utterance does not suffice for appreciation of the utterance's expression of content.³⁸

On the assumption that the hypothesis is too demanding to supply a necessary condition on uptake, the requirements that we have discerned on an adequate account of uptake might appear to be impossible to meet. That is, it might appear impossible to provide an account that is less demanding than the hypothesis, and yet able to ensure both transparency and appreciation of expressive connection. And in that case, one might be inclined either to reject one of the requirements, or to take their conjunction to sustain a sort of transcendental argument to the effect that the demands imposed by the hypothesis are appropriate. However, we signalled at the outset an additional feature of the hypothesis that is not obviously a mandatory component of any account of uptake: the requirement that an account of uptake take the form of an account of the content of propositional knowledge. We considered, and rejected, one alternative hypothesis that involves rejection of the view, the hypothesis that uptake is a matter simply of entertaining an expressed thought. But having

made the requirement explicit, it is clear that there are further alternatives to be explored before we accede to one of the hypotheses we have already considered.

One important alternative, defended in recent work by Ian Rumfitt, gives up the view in favour of a treatment of uptake as constituting, not propositional knowledge about utterances, but rather, as he puts it,

...a second-order cognitive capacity: [in the case of uptake of assertion-like sayings] one who possesses it is in a capacity to gain new knowledge from old (Rumfitt, 2005: 444).³⁹

Specifically,

My understanding an utterance u as [assertion-like] saying that P puts me in a position

- (a) to know that P , in the event of my coming to know that u is true;
- (b) to know that u is true, in the event of my coming to know that P ;
- (c) to know that u is false, in the event of my coming to know that not P ; and
- (d) to know that not P , in the event of my coming to know that u is false.

Understanding a[n assertion-like] saying, in other words, allows knowledge to spread back and forth between the saying's content and attributions of truth to it, and between that content's negation and attributions of falsity to the saying (Rumfitt, 2005: 443).⁴⁰

Rumfitt's proposal has two main advantages over the truth-theoretic proposal. First, Rumfitt's proposal directly sustains appreciation of expressive connection, rather than running a dogleg through propositional knowledge of interpretative truth theorems. Or, rather, his proposal makes a single requirement on understanding do the work we earlier divided between transparency and appreciation of expressive connection. Second, and closely related, the type of appreciation involved in understanding is, on Rumfitt's account, sufficiently demanding that it apparently removes the need for the sort of reflective assurance of appreciation of expressive connection supplied, on the truth-

theoretic proposal, by knowledge of the interpretative status of theorems. Both advantages appear to be consequent upon the transition to a view of understanding as involving second-order capacities together with a very demanding conception of the epistemic standing of those capacities.

At this point, a natural question about Rumfitt's proposal concerns intake. What account of intake would serve the proposal, in particular in underwriting someone's coming to be in the type of epistemic position characterised through (a)–(d)? Even setting aside the sorts of issues arising from the finitude of our capacities that give rise to a concern with compositionality, it is not plausible that we simply bring to bear on utterances prior knowledge of the sort described in (a)–(d). At best, we might have such knowledge about the sentence types instanced in particular utterances. And that appears to be the model to which Rumfitt wishes to appeal in accounting for the onset of the understanding of particular utterances. Rumfitt describes appreciation of the connections in (a)–(d) as akin to knowledge of derived rules of inference, in this case as capacities derived from capacities with respect to rules governing the contribution of sub-sentential expressions to sentential level rules.⁴¹ What is required of intake in such a context is that it should afford knowledge about which expression types are instanced in a particular utterance. In effect, (a)–(d) are to be viewed as derived from a combination of analogues for (a)–(d), or their derivational sources, governing expression types, rather than utterances, together with subjects' competent exercise of abilities to recognise the instancing of those expression types in particular utterances. It is therefore plausible that the second component—the exercises of abilities to recognise the instancing of sentence types—provides Rumfitt's account of intake, his account of the onset of understanding of particular utterances.

Although Rumfitt does not explicitly endorse the view of intake as recognition of the instancing of sentence types, it is the view apparently most in accord with the derivational shape of his proposal. And the appearance is sustained by the fact that he provides an explicit account of the recognition of the instancing of sentence types. According to that account, recognition of the instancing of sentence types is a matter of appreciating the intentions with which speakers make some of the noises that they do, where the relevant range of

intentions are intentions to be recognised as having produced an utterance instantiating one or another specific type of sentence.⁴²

Rumfitt's proposal deserves more discussion than I can afford it here. Indeed, I think that its core, or something close to that core, can provide an account of uptake that is quite plausible. I shall simply note and set aside one difficulty and then all too briefly press a second.

The difficulty that I wish simply to note is that, as stated, the proposal is more or less as demanding of conceptual resources as the truth-theoretic account it is designed to surpass.⁴³ For on the assumption that being in a position to know that an utterance is true or false demands possession of a concept of truth or falsity, understanding will, on Rumfitt's account, often depend upon possession of those concepts. Moreover, attainment of utterance understanding requires, on Rumfitt's proposal, the manipulation of rich theoretical machinery—albeit a machinery, not of propositions, but rather of connections amongst propositions. However, what is central to the proposal is that uptake opens a conduit for the transmission of reasons, however those reasons are characterised, and however precisely the conduit is opened. And it is not implausible to suppose that the types of reasons available to a subject will impact upon the type of connections amongst reasons accessible to the subject. If that is right, then it is plausible that more minimal analogues of (a)–(d) might be provided to characterise the understanding of subjects who lack facility with a concept of truth.⁴⁴ And the concern about the derivational machinery that must be manipulated in order to achieve understanding is readily absorbed into the following difficulty.

The difficulty that I wish to press concerns the interaction between Rumfitt's account of uptake and what appears to be his favoured account of intake. In the first place, notice that neither Rumfitt's account of intake, nor his account of uptake, sustains transparency. For one might be in the position that Rumfitt describes as understanding and yet have no view at all about any of the reasons that one's understanding connects. In that case, one might understand *u* without entertaining a thought that *u* expresses. As noted, Rumfitt in effect collapses transparency and appreciation of expressive connection into appreciation of (a)–(d). Accordingly, one's occurrent understanding of an

utterance need have no impact upon one's first-order psychology aside from one's recognition of the instancing of sentences by utterances. That result anyway appears phenomenologically off-key. But in the present context, it is especially problematic. For despite one's initial failure to entertain a thought expressed by an utterance, acquiring knowledge that the utterance is true immediately puts one in a position to entertain that thought through acquisition of knowledge with the expressed thought as content. It is as if one engages with the thought expressed by an utterance only when, in addition simply to understanding the utterance, one also acquires reason to endorse or to reject it.⁴⁵

That indicates an oddity of the proposal, though perhaps not yet an objection. An objection comes into view when one reflects further on the embedded account of intake. What is required is an account of what puts one in a position to secure uptake, so what enables one to appreciate the connections specified in (a)–(d). According to the account of intake that fits most comfortably with the derivational shape of Rumfitt's proposal, what puts one in that position is a combination of (i) one's recognition that the speaker is trying to direct an instance of a sentence type at one and one's knowledge of which sentence type the speaker is trying to direct at one⁴⁶ and (ii) one's derivation of a sentential analogue of the type of second-order capacity characterised through (a)–(d) appropriate to the intended sentence type. The oddity remarked above turned on the fact that this proposal appears to involve *less* than is involved in ordinary understanding of utterances. But the proposal also seems to involve *more* than is involved in ordinary engagement with utterances. For it is not merely off-key, but false, to claim that speakers typically have sufficiently detailed intentions concerning the types of expressions that they use to serve as appropriate input to the type of derivation that Rumfitt envisages. What speakers typically intend is simply to say that such-and-such, and perhaps to be understood in accord with their intentions, without prejudice as to the specific linguistic means by which they achieve those ends. And competent auditors are typically able to understand utterances despite failing to recognise the details either of expression-directed intentions, or the specifics of the expression types with which they are confronted.⁴⁷

What is, perhaps, the most pressing difficulty for Rumfitt's proposal arises from the burden imposed on uptake as a consequence of the account of intake as recognition of the instancing of sentence types. The reason-connections discerned through uptake, between sentence types, or their instancing in utterances, and thoughts, are contingent: the sentence types could have been reason-connected with different thoughts. And it is difficult to see how epistemic standing with respect to such a structure could be acquired except via something akin to induction from cases—in this case, induction over cases in which one was in a position to know both P (/not P) and that u is true (/false). But in that case, it is not clear that being in an epistemic position, so derived, would differ in significant respects from the position of someone who knew, on similar inductive grounds, an appropriate truth theorem. In particular, it is not clear that induction could put one in a position to treat knowledge that P as putting one in a position to know that u is true, rather than as putting one in a position to know that either u is true or there is a counter-example to the inductively based generalisation. Moreover, even if it were possible to achieve the required position on the basis of something akin to induction, it is far from clear that ordinary speakers typically exploit such a means to that end. For ordinary speakers typically lack detailed appreciation of the evidential base required for such induction, and they would typically allow their apparent understanding to trump conclusions drawn from such a base.⁴⁸

Put another way, if one were in the cognitive position described through (a)–(d), then one would be in a better position than someone who had merely inductive knowledge of a relevant truth-theorem. But it is not clear how one could attain that position on the basis of a combination of the sort of intake that Rumfitt appears to allow and ordinarily ascertained, or ascertainable, facts concerning the contingent correlations amongst the left and right hand sides of (a)–(d). Rumfitt seeks to explain knowledge of the type of reason-connection involved in his proposal by a comparison with knowledge of rules of inference in logic. If I am right, then the comparison limps at a critical juncture. What sustains the special powers of appreciation of reason-connections in logic appears to be a property that those connections have and that the connections involved in Rumfitt's proposal lack: *a priori* accessibility.⁴⁹

6. Conclusion.

The foregoing constitutes a preliminary exploration of some issues that arise when an attempt is made to develop an account of linguistic understanding. The upshot is not yet an account of understanding, even in sketch form. But I believe that many of the pieces required to develop at least a sketch are now in place. In particular, I believe that an account of uptake close to the core of Rumfitt's proposal may be correct. What is required is a way of integrating that core with an adequate account of intake. I shan't attempt to make good on that suggestion now. As I said at the start, my aim here is to make a mild plea for attention to understanding, by advertising some major targets for reflection. And it would be inappropriate, given that aim, to render further attention superfluous.

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² Dummett rarely frames the claim in the strong form according to which a theory of meaning should *be* a theory of understanding. His discussions of the claim invariably are shaped by the question of proper integration of theories, rather than the identity of their targets, and are highly sensitive to the difficulty of adequately specifying the integration requirement. See e.g. Dummett, 1981, 1991. For general discussion of the integration requirement, see Smith, 1992.

³ See e.g. Moore, 1989. The issues here are close relatives of questions about the integration of knowledge and fact pursued by Peacocke, 1999, and questions about their separability pursued by Fine, 2005.

⁴ The question whether Wittgenstein refused to recognise an occurrent sense of 'understand' is answered negatively in McDowell, 2009.

⁵ The need for an additional and less demanding notion of what is said is defended in Travis, 2006.

⁶ In addition, one might need to discern, not only the referents of the unspecified subject of ‘expect’ and the anaphoric object of ‘beat’, but also the specific contents of ‘too’, ‘intelligent’, ‘expect’, and ‘beat’. See e.g. Travis, 1997.

⁷ See Martin, 2002, for discussion of related issues.

⁸ ‘Occasioned’ might be an improvement on ‘occurrent’ in such contexts.

⁹ Consistently with my understanding of what it takes for something to be a state, I needn’t take issue with Rundle, 2001, and Baker and Hacker, 2005, who argue that what we have labelled ‘occurrent understanding’ is itself a form of disposition or ability. Although Rundle and Baker and Hacker take themselves to be in dispute with Dummett with regard to this claim about occurrent understanding, it is not clear that Dummett either takes, or needs to take, a stand on the issue in the discussion that they target. And that would be so even on the episodic understanding of ‘occurrent’, for the onset of a disposition or ability is an episode.

¹⁰ For a discussion and defence of this view of basic *a priori* knowledge, see McFetridge, 1990.

¹¹ Burge, 1993, 1997, 1998, 1999.

¹² Longworth, 2008b. One reason for the qualification ‘in any straightforward way’ is that my disagreement with Burge concerns only the status of core cases of human occurrent understanding. And it is consistent with the *a posteriori* status of occurrent understanding that it can sustain acquisition (or transmission) of *a priori* knowledge via testimony, so that it is open to me to endorse Burge’s further claim that such acquisition (or transmission) is possible. If it is possible, and if it also possible for beings other than us—e.g. infinite beings—to have *a priori* knowledge of what is said, then it may be possible for humans to acquire from such beings *a priori* knowledge of what is said.

¹³ Peacocke, 1976. See also Fricker, 2003.

¹⁴ See e.g. Williamson, 2000.

¹⁵ See Hunter, 1998; Longworth, 2008a.

¹⁶ It is plausible to view the possibility of rational withholding of belief as marking a line between a kind of receptivity and a kind of spontaneity, where that line marks a boundary around the domain of cognition for which a subject is

responsible. Since one has at best limited control over what one takes in through understanding or sense perception, and since the capacities that sub-serve that intake are fallible, allowing intake to encroach on the domain of spontaneity would have the potential to make one responsible for errors without one's control.

¹⁷ For discussion and defence of this view of a function of knowledge in rational psychology, as an enabling condition for the exploitation of factive reasons, see Dancy, 2000, 2008; Hornsby, 2008; Hyman, 1999, 2006; McDowell, 1982, 1994, 1995; Williamson, 2000.

¹⁸ It may be that this condition applies only to creatures with a capacity to have propositional knowledge, or even creatures with a capacity to know of the sort possessed by normal humans. Perhaps, for example, knowledge would not be required to play this role in creatures with a perception-desire psychology.

¹⁹ See e.g. Davidson, 1984: 125, 1986.

²⁰ Indeed, our formulation is consistent with the required epistemic standing being content-less, as it would be, on some views, if it were a form of purely practical knowledge. See especially Moore, 1997. For more general discussion of the content of knowledge-how and practical knowledge see Rumfitt, 2003; Snowdon, 2003; Stanley and Williamson, 2001.

²¹ Davidson, 1984.

²² Thanks to Matthew Soteriou for reminding me about Dummett's observation and for helpful discussion of it.

²³ Some speakers will find acceptable 'supposing', 'believing', etc., but without according them a construal distinct from 'supposes', 'believes', etc.

²⁴ The closest relevant process in the case of supposition would be reasoning under the supposition.

²⁵ Here and throughout I use 'entertaining' as a generic, or determinable, for all specific, or determinate, ways of engaging with a thought, including thinking, believing, knowing, etc. And I shall assume that entertaining logically complex thoughts entails entertaining their elementary component thoughts, so that, for example, entertaining the thought that if Viswanathan will win, then he will not

be disqualified, entails entertaining the thought that Viswanathan will not be disqualified.

²⁶ See McDowell, 1980. For related discussion, see Burge, 1999; Hornsby, 1989; McDowell, 2005.

²⁷ See e.g. Dummett, 1981; Frege, 1918/1956; Higginbotham, 2002; Peacocke, 1981, 1997.

²⁸ Two other potential grounds: (i) Transparency embodies a controversial stand on the question whether understanding an utterance requires engaging a specific thought expressed by the utterance, rather than a thought with the same reference as the utterance; (ii) It is impossible transparently to understand an utterance involving the expression of expletive concepts, or thick ethical concepts, that one cannot, or will not, think with.

²⁹ Transparency is lost on some formulations of Davidson's proposal. For instance, one of Davidson's formulations has it that 'what somebody needs to know is that some *T*-theory for *L* states that ... (and here the dots are to be replaced by a *T*-theory)' (Davidson, 1976: 174). If that were all somebody knew, then their knowledge would not amount to entertaining the thought expressed by a target utterance. An improved formulation would add the requirement that somebody must know that ... (and here the dots are to be replaced by the appropriate theorem of a *T*-theory).

³⁰ See e.g. McFarlane, 2003.

³¹ This is to run together two aspects of the situation that might otherwise be distinguished: (i) appreciation that *u* is true iff the thought one understands to have been expressed, *P*, is true and (ii) appreciation, via transparency, that the thought one understands to have been expressed, *P*, is true iff *P*.

³² For example, one might have apparently reasonable grounds for rejecting the general validity of *modus ponens*. See e.g. McGee, 1985, and for related discussion Williamson, 2003.

³³ The concern here is akin to that raised earlier about Burge's account of understanding. A version of the concern is developed in more detail in Longworth, 2008b.

³⁴ To reiterate, these are not disadvantages of Davidson's proposal *per se*, for that proposal concerns the metaphysics of the expression of content and not our modes of access to the expression of content.

³⁵ A central case for doubt about the necessity even of facility with a concept of truth derives from reflection on the apparent possibility of uptake by small children who plausibly lack facility with such a concept. See Soames, 1989, 2008; Longworth, 2008a.

³⁶ Cf. Higginbotham, 1992.

³⁷ The most obvious case would be one in which a subject knew the bi-conditional on the basis of knowing the truth of both sides of the bi-conditional.

³⁸ See Foster, 1976. See also Davidson, 1976; Higginbotham, 1992; Rumfitt, 1995; Soames, 1989, 2008; Wiggins, 1992.

³⁹ See also Moore's proposal that understanding is (in general) 'knowledge of how to process knowledge' (Moore, 1997: 189).

⁴⁰ See also Rumfitt 1995, 2001.

⁴¹ Rumfitt, 2005: 449–451.

⁴² Rumfitt, 2005: 433–437.

⁴³ Rumfitt is under no illusion about this: 445.

⁴⁴ One suggestion here would be that analogues of (a)–(d) might be framed in terms of a capacity to exploit connections amongst acceptance (/rejection) of *P* and trust (/distrust) in *u*.

⁴⁵ Compare the earlier discussion of the residue of withholding belief in what one takes in through understanding. On Rumfitt's view, the residue would be exhausted by awareness of the instancing of sentence types in utterances.

⁴⁶ Rumfitt, 2005: 435.

⁴⁷ For instance, it is unlikely that you are now in a position to reconstruct the sentence to which this note is appended, despite (I hope) having understood my use of that sentence. See Burge, 1999; Hornsby, 2005.

⁴⁸ Alternatively, if one views the connections between sentence types and thoughts as non-contingent, the burden will shift to explaining recognition of the instancing of sentence types so construed, that is to the derivation of (a)–(d) on the basis of knowledge of their non-contingent sentential analogues. Notice that

the pressure is increased when one removes the simplifying assumption that the reason-connections made available to one through understanding concern utterances, rather than thing done by speakers. For it then becomes apparent just how contingent the reason-connections are, and how little evidence that the connections hold is typically available to ordinary auditors. For discussion of issues in this area, see Burge, 1999; McDowell, 1994.

⁴⁹ The trade-off between austerity of intake and extravagance of resources required for uptake bears comparison with a similar situation in the theory of perception. Consider, for example, the demands imposed on one's ability to attain propositional knowledge about ordinary objects by a sense-data account of sensory intake.