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A Working Paper on Language and Lebenswelt

Unpublished (1958)

Is it the type or the token that means?

1. If we take a typographer's look at the sentences that occur on a piece of paper, we see a sequence of particular sentence tokens. If we look at a particular token, and, shifting over to the reader's perspective, say that it means so and so¹, *what* is it that we say means so and so? We look at a particular token, because there is nothing else to look at, but is it *qua particular* that it means something, or is it *qua specimen* of a kind?

Sometimes it is safe to say, without qualifications, that what means so and so is the *sentence* which the token we look at is a token of. It is safe if the sentence we speak of is always used with the same meaning, and if we know that it is so used. But if we don't know, or if we know that at some places it is used with one meaning and at other places with another, then we ought not to say, without qualifications, that the sentence means so and so since what we say about the sentence we say (ideally) about the totality of its tokens.

What we actually say, is that the sentence, when it is used in such and such a context, means so and so. It is the sentence we speak about, and whatever token of it we point at, we point at it as a token of the sentence. But we do not speak about it without qualifications of context. The phrase designating that which means so and so, is the phrase preceding the words "means so and so", and this phrase is not of the sort "the sentence p", but of the sort "the sentence p in such and such a context". What means so and so is *the sentence in such and such a context*, where the properties that take the place of "such and such" define an open class, and where all tokens of the sentence that are within the context class mean the same. As a limiting case, the resulting context contains only the one token we look at. Even so, it is *qua specimen* of a kind, and not *qua particular*, that the token means what it means. Only if each particular sentence token meant something different from each other token, would it be reasonable to say that it is the particular token *qua particular* that means so and so. (Would such a language be possible?) The reason for not speaking, without qualifications, of the *sentence* meaning so and so, is no reason for saying that it is the particular sentence token *qua particular* that means so and so.² It is a reason for not speaking without qualifications of the sentence meaning so and so.

Language and Lebenswelt

2.1. If we speak about a sentence existing in some of the language³ that we actually use, we cannot, normally, both speak the truth and speak without qualifications about the *sentence*, i.e. about the totality of its tokens. Because of equivocations, qualifications of context are necessary.

2.1.1. It is an ideal, at least in the sense that scientists usually accept it as an ideal, that there be no equivocations in the language of a scientific discipline. The ideal of a science is not only a system of true propositions, but also *a system where any proposition can be identified simply by pointing at any token of the relevant sentence*. In other words, the ideal is a state of language where empirical semantics is superfluous, or where its only role is to verify that it is superfluous.

In order to realize the ideal, some types of words in use in everyday discourse must be excluded from scientific texts. Quine writes:

In a spirit thus not of practical language reform but of philosophical schematism, we may begin by banishing what are known as *indicator words* (Goodman) or *egocentric particulars* (Russell): 'I', 'you', 'this', 'that', 'here', 'there', 'now', 'then', and the like. This we clearly must do if the truths of science are literally to be true independent of author and occasion of utterance. It is only thus, indeed, that we come to be able to speak of sentences, i.e. certain linguistic forms, as true and false. As long as the indicator words are retained, it is not the sentence but only the several events of its utterance that can be said to be true or false. (W.V. Quine: "The Scope and Language of Science", *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*. Vol. 8, No. 29. (May, 1957), pp. 1-17.)

2.1.2. But communication requires not only words, it also requires communicants. An ideal language, like any language, is operative only to the extent the communicants communicate within a common Lebenswelt, i.e. it is operative only within a framework of shared rules and practices.

If an ideal language is introduced into an ideal group of communicants, the result is an ideal (one ideal) state of affairs with, respect to communication.

Where the communicants do not share a common Lebenswelt, there will be talk without communication — irrespective of the character of their language (irrespective of, e.g., the presence or absence of indicator words). There will be an experienced lack of understanding, or worse and more often, there will be the illusion of understanding, with resulting pseudo-agreement and pseudo-disagreement. Where the communicants do share a common Lebenswelt, they will understand each other's sentences as immediately as they recognize each other's faces — irrespective of the character of their language.

We do not hypothesize about the colour of the rose we are looking at, we see it. Within a common Lebenswelt we do not hypothesize about the meaning of what is said, we see it. The meaning of the sentence shows itself, like the colour of the rose.

The meaning of a Navaho sentence does not show itself to an Englishman, and the meaning of what the philosopher says does not always show itself to the layman. Something shows itself, but not always what the philosopher shows him.

Someone points at something: *What* is it that he points at? Someone uses a simile - and some of its literal implications are to be drawn, while others are to be cut: *Which* are they? Such problems arise as the distance in Lebenswelt increases.

What is called an "ideal language" is not per definitionem ideal with respect to the *understanding* of what is said. It is ideal with respect to the generality and deductive simplicity of what is said provided it is understood, or rather whatever the understanding of it.

2.1.3. The workers within a given area of research make use of various devices to provide for a common Lebenswelt. Intensive collaboration in classroom, laboratory, etc., is one. Simplification of the Lebenswelt is another. *The world* cannot be simplified. But *my world* can.

One example of simplification (relative to one group of communicants) is the introduction of a test in some psychological discipline, i.e. if the test is a test of something theorized about prior to the test (if the test is a test of x, where "x" is a term in use prior to the test). The Lebenswelt which results after a given test has been constructed is less complex than the Lebenswelt of the test-creator at the time of construction.

Words in Use and Words Talked About

3.1. Analytic philosophers make use of words to talk about the use of words. To talk about the uses of words is to talk empirical semantics, in the sense in which talking about the weather is talking meteorology: the intellectual responsibility is towards that discipline. But *the talking* is not itself empirical (is not doing empirical semantics) — even if empirical beliefs about which words are used how sometimes lie behind our choice of words, and always have some post facto relevance to it. We use words to talk about words, but the words we use are not themselves talked about in our talking with them.

The domain of *empirii* contains everything that an empirical statement can be about, and all statements that are *about* something, are empirical. What is talked about always lies in the domain of empirii. Logic is no exception, if logic is what is talked about. To say about something that it consists of three black symbols, or that it is a well-formed formula, is, in both cases, to make an empirical statement, of typography or of logic. Every subject matter is in the domain of empirii. The *radical* distinction between logical and empirical is not the distinction between two kinds of subject matter, it is the distinction between talking and what is talked about. The logic which does not lie in the world of empirii, lies in the talking, and not in what is talked about.

3.2. If I assert a tautology, I do not assert anything about the non-linguistic reality. But I do not assert anything about language either. An assertion *about* language is just as much an empirical assertion as is an assertion about non-linguistic reality. What does not belong to the domain of empirii, is the use of the sentence at the moment it is used (i.e. in its mode of being used (the time-reference is accidental), or the meaning of the sentence at the moment it is meant. Its meaning shows itself. And its logic lies in its meaning. But if I say, "The meaning of "p" showed itself to be...", then I make an empirical assertion.

3.3. If there is one fundamental distinction in epistemology, it is not the distinction between the analytic and the synthetic, but the distinction between the talking and what is talked about. If words are what is talked about, it is the distinction between *use* and *mention*. Or between *being in use* and *being referred to*, between use and *what is mentioned*. I use one word to mention another. The mention lies in the word I use, while the word I mention is itself mentioned.

When I make use of one sentence to talk about another sentence, the sentence I make use of and the sentence I talk about may share the property of being synthetic, or the one may be synthetic while the other is analytic. But while the first sentence may say about the second sentence that it is synthetic, it does not say anything of the sort about itself (since it says nothing about itself). The predicates 'analytic' and 'synthetic' can only be predicated about the sentence I talk *about*. The sentence I talk *with* is beyond classification at the moment of talking with it. It shows itself as being in use.

That is one way in which the distinction between use and mention is logically prior to the distinction between analytic and synthetic.

When I use a word to talk about a word, what does the first word denote?

4.1. The word I speak about does not occur in the sentence with which I speak about it. But sometimes a *picture* of the word I speak about occurs typographically as part of the word I make use of to speak about it — like a picture of a horse could be placed in a sentence to denote a horse. We seldom mistake a picture of a horse for the horse, and we ought not to mistake a picture of a word for the word either.⁴

If I use the word "'true'" to speak about the word "true", some of the tokens I speak about are pictured within the quotation-marks of the word I use. The word I *use* occupies a word's place in the sentence, i.e. as a typographical shape it contains everything on *its* side of the space dividing it from its neighbouring words

Consider the following sequence: The term "true" consists of four letters. The term "'true'" consists of four letters and a pair of quotation-marks. The term ""true"" consists of four letters and two pairs of quotation-marks. Etc. The first sentence in the sequence mentions the term "true", but this term does not occur in the sentence. The second sentence mentions the term "'true'", which occurs in the first sentence, but not in the second. Etc. Our present point is that when we write, or read, a sentence, each word in that sentence is *used*, and no word in that sentence is mentioned. The distinction between use and mention is not a distinction between anything that occurs in use. It is a special case of the distinction between the talking and what is talked about.

4.2. When we use the word "'true'" to speak about the word "true", what is it that the first word denotes?

4.2.1. First of all, it does not only denote what, in a strict sense, it pictures. In picking out denotata of the word "'true'", we not only pick out exact copies of "true", but also of "True", "TRUE", etc. We also pick out exact copies of "tru", if we recognize them as misprints or mis-spellings of "true".

If we sort an exact copy of the word "tru" as a denotatum of the word "'true'", we don't do it on observing its shape alone. We do it on observing its shape and on understanding enough of its use to see that it is used in place of "true". Shall we say, then, that the word "'true'" does not denote certain typographical shapes, but that it denotes the meaning or use of certain typographical shapes, or the shapes together with their meaning? -- since we do rely on some understanding of the use of a given token when we do or do not include it among the denotata. I think not.

4.2.2. There are two things to notice, first: When we see something in a given aspect, we do not also see that aspect. Second: We don't see something in a given aspect if we don't see that something. Take the second point first.

4.2.2.1. In order to see something, as an aesthetic object, we must be able simply to see it, where "it" refers to a thing in space. In order to see the meaning of a word, we must be able simply to see that word. A meaning is always a meaning of something, and that something must occur in space. An invisible language is possible, if only it is audible, or tangible, or smellable. But an unobservable language is not possible.

4.2.2.2. When I see the meaning of a sentence, or when I fail to see it, I perceive that sentence in the aspect of *Verstehen*.⁵ If I speak about its meaning, I speak within the aspect of *Verstehen*, but I do not speak about *Verstehen*. The aspect I speak in, I do not speak about.

It is not the meaning that is meaningful, it is the physical object. If I say that the word "true" is meaningful, or that it has a use, then I speak about the word only, and not about the word together with its meaning. I speak about a typographical or phonetical thing, and not about the meaning of that thing.

That *Verstehen* is a *sine qua non* does not imply that talking about *Verstehen* is a *sine qua non*. In this lies the theoretical justification of operational definitions.

A Note on Operational Definitions

5. One who knows nothing about analysis asks me what the word "analysis" refers to. I tell him that it refers to what the so-called "analytical philosophers" do, or to the result of their activity, and I also give him the names of a couple of analysts.

5.1. But these men are engaged in a variety of activities: construing formal systems, writing expressionistic plays, studying the various uses of various terms, building models of possible architectural structures, refuting imaginary philosophers, working out logical consequences of various possible distinctions, writing limericks about micro-organisms, etc., etc. How can the ignorant Dick out the activity of doing philosophical analysis from the variety of doings?

My answer is of no use to him, since it will answer his question only if he already knows the answer to it, i.e. only if he already knows what the word "analysis" refers to.

5.2. Is my answer circular, then? If I say, "Analysis is what the analyst does", and do not mean to say that whatever the analyst does, it is analysis, then what I say really means the same as "Analysis is what the analyst does when he is doing analysis". But if this means the same as "The word "analysis" refers to what the analyst does when he is doing analysis", then there is no circle involved. I first use the word ""analysis"", and then the word "analysis", and these two words do not mean the same.⁶

But something is wrong with my answer. If it is not that it is circular, then it is something else. I tell the ignorant that analysis is what the analyst does, and after I have told him that. He is as ignorant as before. What is wrong is not the sentence I give him as an answer, but that I give it him as an answer. There is nothing wrong with the sentence, only I give it a wrong use when I use it to answer his question. My answer is the scheme of an answer. He cannot use the scheme but I can. My answer is the sort of answer I can give myself before I give him a different answer. I say to myself, "Analysis is what the analyst does" — and then I pick out the relevant activities. I give him, perhaps, a text or two, and say, "Here, this is what the word "analysis" refers to."⁷ (My second answer, too, is of no use to him if he does not know *something*, e.g. if he does not know that it is not the type or the style I point at. But he need not know the *answer*).

The question is not any longer, "How does the ignorant know how to pick out the relevant activities?" He does not know. The question is, "How do I pick them out?" And the answer is, "I know them already."

5.3. There is no definition without a definiens, and the definiens we must understand. The cases where pointings take the place of verbal definitions are no exceptions. So language must be with us already before we can give or receive definitions. He who receives the definition will understand the definiendum after he has received the definiens, but he who gives the definition must understand the word he defines before he defines it. I can understand a word that has not been defined, but I cannot define a word which I don't understand, since without such understanding there is nothing to guide my choice of definiens.⁸

But the fact that I cannot give an operational definition of a word if I do not already know its meaning does not disqualify operational definitions (even if, perhaps, it falsifies one version of operationalism). It does not, because the fact that I must *make use of* Verstehen in selecting the relevant factors (in making the definiens), does not imply that I must *talk about* Verstehen in the definiens. I who make the definiens and he who receives it both make use of Verstehen, i.e. of something we cannot see or point at, but neither of us talks about Verstehen. The argument of Verstehen does not disqualify operational definitions, it only points out a *sine qua non*. An operational definiens, like other pieces of language, works only if it is presented within a common

language which is there already. Its practical justification lies in the degree of subsumability⁹, and its theoretical justification lies in the phenomenological and existentialist philosophy of Lebenswelt.

On Uses of Terms and Terms in Use

1. If a philosopher sets himself the task of making an *explication*, in the sense of Carnap, of some term "x" in use in everyday discourse or within some scientific discipline, then *one* of the requirements of adequacy is the following: *Of the sentences which contain "x", and which have the status of expressing true propositions prior to the explication, as many as possible shall retain their status of being true when the explicandum has been replaced by the explicatum.* The present requirement corresponds to Carnap's requirement of *similarity* between explicatum and explicandum, as it is stated on page 7 of his *Logical Foundations of Probability* (University of Chicago Press, 1950). Factors other than the *number* of sentences retained as true ought, of course, to be introduced. When that is done, we shall, perhaps, have what Næss calls a "transintentional precization" of Carnap's similarity requirement.

If each instance of the explicandum term is not used in the same sense, then the above requirement implies that *the most frequent sense* shall be selected as explicandum.

For the sake of argument, let us suppose that the term "true" is normally used as a sign of assertion, but that it is also sometimes used in the sense of 'strongly confirmed'.

If a person said, e.g., "p was true at time t_1 , but at time t_2 it wasn't true anymore", then this would be a symptom of the latter use. If it is said that this would be an *incorrect use of the term "true"*, what does it mean beyond that it would be a *rare* use of *that* term? Could it have been the prevalent use at all times, and yet incorrect?

Now, it is not less important to give an explication of the notion of a sentence being confirmed than of the notion of a sentence being true. If the term "true" was used half of the time as a sign of assertion, and half of the time in the sense of 'strongly confirmed', and if there did not exist the phrase 'strongly confirmed', most of the time 'strongly confirmed', then the two explicata would have an equal right to the title "explicatum of the term "true"", or even to the title "explicatum of the notion of a sentence being true".

It is, however, a fact about our language (not, perhaps, about language in general, but also not only about the English language) that there exist different expressions for the notion of being true and the notion of being confirmed, namely, in English, the two expressions "true" and "confirmed" respectively. It is also, we have supposed, a fact about our language that the term "true" is normally used as a sign of assertion, and only seldom in the sense of 'strongly confirmed' and that the term "confirmed" is normally used in the sense of 'confirmed', and only seldom, if at all, as a sign of assertion (even if it is empirically true that if a person asserts "p has been confirmed", he will normally assert p as well).

Our language being as it is, Tarski has given an explication of the notion of a sentence being true, and not of the notion of a sentence being confirmed. If the prevalent use of the term "true" in everyday discourse or within the sciences were not its use as a sign of assertion, then Tarski had not explicated the notion of a sentence being true, but something else. The intellectual performance would not have been less important, but it would have been a different one. (Take it as an autobiographical statement only, when I say that I am not certain that it *is* not a different one. I.e., I am not certain that the term "true" normally functions like Tarski thinks it does).¹⁰

2. But, granting that the term "true" normally functions as a sign of assertion, is it not accidental that the term "true" which functions like that?? If we think of language as an artifact, it is. If we think of language as something, which *is there*, it is not.

There is a sense in which Tarski does not explicate the use of the term "true", nor of the term "wahr", but *the notion of a sentence being true*. Is there not, then, a sense in which Tarski is not

responsible towards the actual use of the term "true", but only towards the notion of a sentence being true, irrespective of the term used to convey that notion?

It is essential to an *explication* that the explicandum (whether we take it to be *a given term in a certain use*, or *a given use of a certain term*, or *a given use simply*) exist prior to the explication of it. Now, a given-use-simply exists only as a given use of *something*. The given use which Tarski explicates is, we have supposed, a given use of the term "true", or of any other term which does the same job as the term "true". If we think of language as an artifact — that is God's perspective on it, not ours - the term "true" is accidental, but if the *job* it does is done in our language, then it is not accidental that there is *something* which does the job. (That something need not be a group of ink marks or of speech-sounds, but it must be something which man can produce at will, which can be observed by other men, etc.) Whatever that something is, we *learn* a given use, and we learn to *identify* a given use exercised by others, as a use *of that something* which it is a use of. If we think of language as *being there* - and that is *our* perspective on it -, the something which we have learnt to use as a sign of assertion is, we have supposed, the term "true".

If I am told that Tarski has explicated the notion of a sentence being true, but do not know which term it is that is used to convey that notion in the language which is my language, then I do not recognize the explicandum when I see it. And to know an explicatum without being able to recognize its explicandum, is like knowing that something is an improvement without knowing what it is an improvement of. The explication does not operate if I do not know where to let it operate. (An *explication* does not leave everything as it is.)

2.1. It is *logically possible* to know that Tarski has explicated the notion of a sentence being true, and yet not know which *term* it is that is used to convey that notion in my language. The proposition does not imply the sentence, and the meaning does not imply the term.

But also, *as a matter of fact*, if I am told that there is an x such that x is normally used as sign of assertion, then I know that x is the term "true", or the term "wahr", etc. If I am told that there is a y such that y is normally used to combine two or more sentences such that the resulting complex is true only if each constituent sentence is true, then I know that y is the term "and", or the term "und", etc. My knowledge of the language I use is not restricted to what is *implied*. It includes a (varying) number of contingencies. That *something* is implied is not a contingency. But that *that* something is implied rather than *something else* is a contingency. Implication as such is logical, but what is implied is a matter of empirii.

Sometimes we do not *ask* for the term, but pick it up automatically. And so we think that the *term* is irrelevant, since there is no question about it. (But also, if we say that the explicandum is a *term*, it is not the a shape qua shape we speak of, but a shape in use.)

Conversely, a *term* does not imply its meaning, that is, as it does not. Nor does the sentence, as a sequence of shapes, imply its proposition.

A Note on Propositions and Verstehen

1. If I know that Jones says that there is someone in the garden, then I do not know that Jones says, "There is someone in the garden ("p")", but I do know that he says "p" or some sentence synonymous to "p". Conversely, if I know that Jones says, with assertive intent, "There is someone in the garden", then what I know does not imply that Jones says that there is someone in the garden. But as a matter of fact I know that that is just what he says.

1.1. It is said: You don't know what Jones asserts if you only know that Jones says, "There is someone in the garden". In order to know the meaning of the sentence "There is someone in the garden" you have to know *which language* it belongs to (and also to *know* that language).

Well, supposed I don't know which language it belongs to. How do I come to know it? If someone says to me, "Jones spoke L1 when he said "There is someone in the garden"", do I then know which language it is? I do, if I know which language the sentence "Jones spoke language L1 when he said"..."" is in. Etc. The regress is broken only if at some point I simply *understand* what is said. (It doesn't help me to know which language a sentence belong to if I don't know that language. And also, normally, if I know the language, I usually know which language it is, and there is little point in telling me).

The specification "*only if I know which language*" reduces to, for instance: Only if I know that the sentence "There is someone in the garden" means that there is someone in the garden do I know that it means that there is someone in the garden.

1.2. It is said: You understand a sentence of a secret language, say, if you know the code of its construction. But the code is itself given in some language. Hence, in order to know the code, I must understand that language. And to do so, must I understand the code of its construction?

References to semantic rules do not break the regress. The regress is broken only if at some point I simply understand what is said. And the language I simply *understand* is the language I use. It is my ordinary language.

The impossibility of reducing propositions to sentences, is the impossibility of reducing the mode of *being in use* to the mode of *being talked about*.

Appendix I

It is in the reader's perspective that we ask for the meaning of a word or sentence, but it is not when we just read. When we just read, we don't try to *find out* whether the sentence we read means so and so or something else. We *see* what it means, though not in a sense of "see" which implies that what we see really is what we see it to be, since there is always room for misunderstanding. In that sense of "see" we normally see the sentence, the typographical object, but not its meaning not the proposition it expresses. But there is another sense of "see" in which we see whatever we perceive, whatever is phenomenologically present, when we look at something. And what we perceive when we look at a sentence, is usually its meaning. Indeed, we often remember what was meant, but not what the sentence looked like. We noticed the proposition, but not the sentence. But if we don't see what is meant, we try to remember the sentence.

It is when language works at its best that we simply mean what we say and see what is meant. And language works at its best, or at a maximum of ease, when a person is talking to himself in a familiar idiom, or when two or more persons are talking to each other in an idiom equally familiar to all of them, i.e. when in talking respects they are one person. Nothing worth calling a "language" is *private*, in the deepest sense, to one person only, but there are indefinite numbers of languages that are private, in quite a deep sense, to a few persons only. Sometimes it is the syntax that is most private, and sometimes it is the semantics. Examples of the former are, perhaps, the jargons of different schools of metaphysics and theology, while the jargons of highly specialized scientific disciplines are instances of the latter. Within such a language around *communication* is unproblematic, i.e. there are no problems person says beyond the problems there are about the meaning of what one says to oneself.

It is when people use the same words but not the same language (when they play with the same pieces but in different sets of rules) that we either don't see what is meant, or we see it wrongly. But if we don't see, or if we want to check our seeing, how do we find out?

There are two ways of learning a language, or bits of ones. The one is the way we learnt our mother tongue — from scratch (the direct method as it, or something like it, is called). The other is

the way we normally learn a foreign language, at least in part by learning to translate into a language that we already know (the indirect method).

It is only a limited number of languages or specialized jargons that we can learn in the direct way, simply because of the time it takes.

And since the direct way of learning a language also requires direct contact with one or more of those who actually use it, there are a number of languages which we cannot, in practice or in principle, learn in this way. There are dead languages, and there are more or less specialized jargons whose practitioners are dead, or otherwise unavailable

Sometimes it is necessary, and usually it is practicable, to learn a foreign language or jargon in the indirect way. But there is more than one indirect way. Take the simplest case of not seeing what is meant. We read a text that is written in a language (or jargon) with which we are familiar, with the exception of one word only whose use is foreign to us. How do we come to learn it?

If our lack of understanding is of the rough sort, it is often sufficient to consult a dictionary. But it is not sufficient if we already understand the use of the word on the dictionary level of understanding it. It is also not sufficient if the question we ask about the use of the word is a different sort of question from the one that is answered in the dictionary. There are many ways to describe the use of a word, and the philosopher's typical way is not the lexicographer's typical way.

Most of the questions that philosophers ask about the use of words differ both in aspect and in exactness from the sort of question that the lexicographers try to answer. The philosophers ask: "is the word "see" (in such and such a context) used in a way that makes the sentence "I see with my eyes" analytic, or in a way that makes it synthetic?" "Is it used in a way which implies that we cannot be wrong about what we see?" Etc.

Sometimes it looks as if dictionary definitions answer such questions, but it is rather doubtful that they do. Take the first definition of "see" in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, which seems to answer the first of the philosopher's questions. The definition is "have or exercise the power of discerning objects with the eyes." Since there is a reference to the use of one's eyes in it, one might think that it implies that the sentence "I see with my eyes" is analytic. But exactly what does the dictionary definition say? Does it say that the phrase: "have or exercise the power of discerning objects with the eyes" is a synonym, in some strict sense of that word, of the word "see"? If so, when is it a *synonym*? The dictionary obviously does not say that the word "see" is always used with that meaning since it gives more than one definition. Is it used with that meaning in the sentence "I see with my eyes"? Is it always so used in that sentence?

More than that: Is the word "see" always used in that sentence? Isn't it sometimes "'see'", and not "see", that is used? -- namely, when the sentence is used to teach foreigners the word "see" after they have learnt the word "eye". Likewise it is, perhaps, sometime the word "'eyes'" that is used, namely when the sentence is used to teach foreigners the word "eye" after they have learnt the word "see". (We *need* not say that it is the word "'see'" that is used when the sentence is used to teach the meaning of that word. We can either say that the language teacher uses the word "'see'" to talk about the word "see", or we can say that he uses the word "see", and teaches its use by showing it in use. To ask which of the two is true, is to ask a sort of question that goes beyond what can be *found out*. Whatever answer we give, it is one that we *construe*. This does not mean that empirical evidence is irrelevant but it means that the answer is not itself a straightforward empirical assertion).

The dictionary does not answer these questions, and tradition, i.e. the tradition of how to read dictionaries, does not answer them either. But if we don't know the answer to each of these questions, then we don't know what, exactly, our dictionary definition says either. It is, for example, quite possible that it does not assert synonymity between the word "see" and the phrase "have or exercise the power of discerning objects with the eyes". One other possibility is to construe it as

saying something like this: "For one of the uses of the word "see" it is empirically true that whenever one sees something one make use of one's eyes." Having eyes and having them open, etc. would be a necessary condition for seeing something (and, perhaps also a sufficient condition, depending upon how "etc." is filled in). But it would not be so as a matter of meaning. It would serve to guide our use of the word "see". But it would not answer the philosopher's question about the way it is used the way it is used. And information about *synonymity* would answer some of the philosopher's questions only if it were much more exacting, than it actually is.

The basic defect of dictionary definitions is not, however, that they say about meanings is inexact, but that they are inexact to the point of not even being clearly about meanings. It is, as we know, notoriously difficult to distinguish between what a word means and what is always true about what it denotes.

If the dictionary does not answer our question about the use of the word, how do we then find out? If the author is available, we can ask him. If he is not available, we can try to work out some of the consequences of alternative hypotheses about how the word is used, and then look for evidence in the rest of the text, or outside it, that confirms one of the hypotheses and disconfirms the others. If we work with rather coarse alternatives, the latter procedure will sometimes give safe results, but if the alternatives are sufficiently nice to be of philosophical relevance, it will also be near impossible to assign probability values to the different hypotheses. We pass the border of what can simply be found out, and enter the realm of construing and deciding.

If we use the first way, and ask the author about his use of the word, we enter into dialogue with him. His answer may be a direct report from memory about how in fact he used that word, or how in fact he intended it. But his answer may also be a result of the dialogue, or his conclusion from it, rather than a report simply. The more sophisticated the question, the more likely it is that the answer will be of the second type. Even so, the answer is his, for example in the sense that he accepts responsibility for it, but it is one that is construed rather than found out, and it is construed from a dialogue that we played a part in ourselves. But because the author himself also played a part in the construction (be it smaller or greater than ours), and because he accepts responsibility for it (normally we give the author of a sentence the first right to say what it means), his own answer to the question of how he used the word is a safer guide to his use of it than what we can find out or construe from his text.

Summing up, it is when we don't simply understand (see) what is meant, or when we want to check our understanding that we look for some way of finding out, of coming to understand. And it is when it is impossible or impracticable simply to *learn* to understand, in some way like the way we learnt our mother tongue, that we need some sort of *research* procedures or results. Sometimes lexicographers have done the work already, and we find the information we ask for in their dictionaries or monographs. Sometimes we ask questions that are different in aspect or exactness from the questions that the lexicographers ask, and then their answers don't answer our questions. If our questions are of the second type (as the philosophers' questions usually are), we must either abstain from seeking answers to them, or we must engage in some sort of research ourselves. It is when we choose research that we enter the field of *empirical semantics*.

In the major theoretical work of the field, Arne Næss' *Interpretation and Preciseness*, two procedures are discussed in great detail: asking questions and analysing texts. Næss has experimented with a wide variety of semantic questionnaires, and he has sketched a standard scheme for so-called, "occurrence analysis". He is almost neurotically keen about the intricacies of research into meanings, and yet it is always the technical problems within the realm of what can be found out that he discusses. The philosophical problems, the deep ones that Wittgenstein discusses (and Næss also, with his friends, sometimes), are almost systematically left out.

Appendix II¹¹

Studies in empirical semantics sometimes report upon the relative frequency of the various senses in which a given term may be used. Professor Crockett, in a critical examination of the so-called "Oslo Group of Empirical Semantics"¹², quotes from Ryle's article "Ordinary Language"¹³, where Ryle says, speaking about the habit of identifying a given *use* by reference to a given *usage*¹⁴ "In fact, of course, this appeal to prevalence is philosophically pointless, besides being philologically risky." As to Professor Crockett's use of Ryle's statement as a critique of the Oslo group, only this need to be said. The Philosophers of the Oslo group are not particularly interested in the frequencies of various uses. It is true that Næss has studied the relative frequencies of various uses of the term "true" among Norwegian students. But this was in order to make a rough test of some hypotheses set forth by Tarski and Carnap about the prevalence of a certain use of the term "true". What the Oslo philosophers are interested in is the *testability* of assertions about the use or uses of a given term, and in particular in that aspect of the problem of testability which is invariant with respect to the generality of the assertions.

As to Ryle's assertion, its pedagogical point is, I think, that if the sort of philosophical activity cultivated at Oxford at present (by J.L. Austin, Ryle himself, and others) is characterized as a study of and an appeal to *ordinary language*, then this does not hold if it is taken to mean that they study the relative frequencies of the different uses of a given term, and then appeal to the most frequent one.

But from the fact that Oxford philosophers do not appeal to prevalence, it does not follow that the appeal to prevalence is always philosophically pointless. Tarski has appealed to the (supposed) prevalence of a certain use of the term "true", and so has Carnap. It is my opinion that the appeal is central to their work, and that their works are centrally philosophical.

NOTES

¹ See Appendix I.

² Quine seems to think that it is. He writes: "Strictly speaking, what admits of truth and falsity are not statements as repeatable patterns of utterance, but individual events of statement utterance. For, utterances that sound alike, can vary in meaning with the occasion of the utterance." (Quine, W.V. *Methods of Logic*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1950/59, p. XI.) Quine then refers both to what he calls "casual ambiguities" and to the so-called "systematic ambiguities" of indicator words.

Ought we to speak of the two as subclasses of the same? - of ambiguities? Ought we to say that the word "I", for instance is used with a different meaning each time it is used by a different person?

If we identify the meaning of a sentence with what *we must know about the sentence before we can decide its truth or falsity*, then we don't know the meaning of a sentence in the first person unless we know which particular person the word "I" refers to on a particular utterance of it. (It is no use in saying that we can replace "the present speaker" for "I", since "the present" shares the lot of "I".) On such a notion of meaning, we don't know the meaning of the sentence "I am six foot tall" if, say, we hear it from behind a wall and cannot tell the speaker from his voice. We know part of the meaning, since we know it implies, if true, that he who says so is six foot tall, whoever he is, and that there is at least one person six foot tall behind the wall. But we don't know the complete meaning, since we don't know who he is.

On the same notion of meaning, if another person behind the wall says the same words, "I am six foot tall", then this time the sentence means something different, since this time the word "I" refers to a different person, whoever he is. If we walk into the room behind the wall to decide the truth or falsity of what was said, we shall have to ask *who* said it. If only one of them is pointed out, we can only decide the truth or falsity of one of the two utterances (But if we don't know whether the one pointed out is the one who spoke first or next, then also we don't know which of the two utterances have the truth-value which we find that one of them has.) Since the pointing out of one speaker does not enable us to determine the truth value of both utterances, it follows that the two utterances do not mean the same.

These are some of the things that seem to follow if we apply a current notion of meaning and sameness of meaning to indicator words. They are not comforting consequences, but before we draw the moral, there is a lot more of casuistics to be done. But we ought to notice that it is not the systematic ambiguities that disturb communication. It is the casual ones.

³ We do not use the phrase "natural language", since it implies, or is easily taken to imply, that there are other languages than the "natural" ones. But there is no language in actual use that is not a natural language. Logicians construct so-called "artificial languages" and Produce formal theories about their properties. But if an artificial language is set to do the work of a language, it becomes, eo ipso, a natural language, and the questions about its properties are on a par with questions about other natural languages.

⁴ In our current and convenient practice, the words we use to denote particular words *picture* their denotata, or some of the typical representatives of their denotata. In a little less literal sense of "picture", onomatopoeica picture the sounds they denote.

When the early Wittgenstein said that the sentence pictures the reality it is about, he did not, I think, use the word "picture" in a literal sense. Perhaps he used it in the sense of 'graph', or in a sense such that x is a picture of y if there is some f such that $x=f(y)$. If he used the word "picture" in some such sense, I can understand his doctrine. But then, also, it does not say very much, since it is always possible, for any x and for any y , to construct an f such that $x=f(y)$. Hence, if we seek an interpretation of Wittgenstein's doctrine which makes it both true and informative, this is not it either.

⁵ We perceive something in the mode of *Verstehen* when we perceive it as meaning something. The word "understanding" is sometimes used in the sense in which we use the word "Verstehen". It is so used when we say that we *understand* a sentence when we *see what it means*, in contrast to seeing it as a typographical object only. What can be understood, in this sense, is not only words or sentences, or other items of a

language, but also gross bodily movements, namely when we perceive them as actions, or facial mimicry, when we perceive it as expressions.

When we simply understand, we usually don't say we understand. We say, "I understand", or the like, when it is not quite obvious that we do, i.e. when it does not simply go without saying. But the reference of the word "understanding" is not restricted to the cases where we actually employ the word. It also includes the cases where we simply understand, and so don't think of it, not to say it. (Ryle, and also Austin, sometimes mix the question of when we use a word with the question of *how* we use it. Quite a few of their philosophical statements follow from this mixing. See, for instance, what Austin writes about "intention" in: "A Plea for Excuses", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, New Series, Vol. 57 (1956-1957), pp. 1-30.

Not everything can be the object of understanding. The distinction between what can and what cannot has something to do with the distinction phenomenologists try to point at when they speak about *intentional acts* versus *physical facts*. If I give my friend a book, that is an intentional act, whereas "the bodily movements I make in giving it him are, qua bodily movements, physical facts. Making the same movements, I might have loaned him the book only. The physical facts would then be the same, but the act would be a very different one. If in the one case I say, "I give it you", while in the other, "You may borrow it for three days", then there would be a difference in the physical facts, but as such it would be a phonetical difference only, and as such it would, essentially, have nothing to do with the difference between giving and loaning. It is only when we attend to the *meaning* of the two utterances that they reveal the one case of handing over the book as giving it away and the other as loaning it away. But to attend to the meaning of what is said, is to attend to an intentional act, and not to physical facts only.

Being a result of higher order perceptual organization, the phenomenon of Verstehen has its psychology and its neurology. But just as we must make use of words, so we must make use of Verstehen if we are to talk about Verstehen. In this sense it is irreducible.

Theodore Abel's article "The Operation called Verstehen" (*American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 54, No. 3 (Nov., 1948), pp. 211-218) has become something of a classic in some quarters. It certainly is an excellent article, only the word "Verstehen" ought to have been substituted, at each of the places it occurs, by the word "Einführung". Verstehen is not an operation, it is a mode of perception. This is true not only in our use of the word, but also for its *typical* use within the German Verstehen school.

⁶ The definiendum may be seemingly repeated in the definiens without circularity, if either it is used on a different level at the two places, or if at the one place it occurs as an independent word, while at the other place it occurs as a not independent part of a larger symbol (even if it occurs typographically as an independent word). In both cases it is, of course, only seemingly the same word, that is used twice.

⁷ If, in saying this, I fix the reference of the word to what I point at, i.e. if I make it logically impossible that I point in the wrong direction, then I give him a definition (or, perhaps, an indeterminate part of one). And the definition I give him is operational, not in the (not essential) sense that its definiens refers to operations, i.e. to certain sequences in time, but in the sense that it refers to something we can see and point at. I would have said that the definiens is operational in the sense that it refers to observables, were it not for the fact that the word "observable" is very often restricted in its use to one aspect only of what can be seen, or otherwise "observed", namely the physical aspect. We cannot, perhaps, see and point at something if there is not a physical aspect on it, but our pointing at it need not be in the physical aspect. We can point at words, and words are physical in the sense that we can see them in the physical aspect, as objects of some thickness, shape, colour, etc. But there are other aspects on words than the physical, and, usually, when I point at a word, I do not point at it in the physical aspect. If there is one aspect on words that is the ordinary aspect, it is the aspect in which they mean something, and not the aspect in which they are physical objects only.

When we see something, we see it in a certain aspect, and when we point at something, we point at it in a certain aspect. Pointing, like other items of our language, has its intention as well as its extension. You don't see what I point at if you don't see it in the aspect I see it in when I point at it. If I point at the word, it does not help you much to see the same shapes as I see, if you don't see the word I point at.

⁸ To invent a word and let it stand as an abbreviation of a string of words already known might, post facto, be called to "define" that word. But, normally, when we speak of defining a word, we speak about words that are there already. We don't define non-existent words.

What comes out after we have defined a word operationally is not exactly the same as what was there before, but it is, in some sense, determined by what was there before. An operational definition of a word is very much like an improvement of something. And an improvement is not only an improvement of something already existent, it is also an improvement of one thing rather than of another, like the bicycle is an improvement of the velociped, but not of the spinning wheel. If a word is not there already, and if we don't already mean something by it, we cannot give an operational definition of it either.

When we define something, operationally or otherwise, what is the something we define? The definiendum is a physical object in the sense that it can be viewed in the physical aspect, but it is not in the physical aspect that it means something, or that we ask for its meaning. We ask for the meaning of something physical, but we don't ask in the physical aspect. So what we define is neither a meaning nor something physical, it is the meaning of something physical.

⁹ The requirement of subsumability is the functional equivalent in the empirical sciences to the requirement of effectiveness in the formal sciences.

¹⁰ The fact that it is the use of the term "true" which Tarski explicates, makes our formulation of the adequacy requirement a little problematic. Also, there is the general problem of the status of an (approximate) equivalence requirement versus an (approximate) synonymy requirement.

¹¹ Appendix II is two earlier notes that will be revised and worked into the main text of this manuscript.

¹² Professor Crockett's paper was read at a meeting of the philosophical seminar of the University of Cincinnati, in January 1956.

¹³ *The Philosophical Review*, 1953, p. 177.

¹⁴ I.e. the habit of identifying a given use by a sentence like, e.g., "The term "x" is here used in its most frequent sense."