On Words and Propositions

Adam InTae Gerard[1]

0.0   Introduction

The aim of this short work is to specify a unique way of thinking about *words* and their *meanings*.

Formal logic has guided our understanding about the way that words, names, or predicates latch on to the external world. Presumably this occurs by relationships of reference, correspondance, and the like. For example, the referent of a name would be the thing a name refers to. This basic theory of reference was presupposed by Frege and has been elaborated upon greatly in the face of extensive criticism.

With respect to definitions, traditionally, two broad conceptions have dominated our understanding of this very fundamental concept (indeed, such conceptions are presupposed or made explicit within linguistics, computer science, and mathematical logic):

(1) *intensional* definitions or sentences (whereby the predicates of assertions are described by a unifying property had by all bearing members) (2) *extensional* definitions or sentences (whereby the predicates of assertions are described by a specific list of all bearing members).

1.0   Words

Traditionally, a word has been conceived as combination of morphemes and phonemes so assembled that upon use (utterance or writing) the word's assigned meaning (specified by use – consider slang not yet accepted by a dictionary - on one view, definitionally specified via a publicly defined asset like a dictionary, or by mapping to the world via a relation of correspondance justifying the other two approaches).

I shall loosely group all such views under the heading "pointer theories". *Pointer theories*, in one way or another, see the meanings of words as being assigned like a person saying a sound and pointing at something (whether it is a reference in a dictionary, a kind of behavior, or an item in the external world).

Pointer theories give rise to the common and popular "web of meanings" metaphor often encountered throughout philosophy.

I would like to propose an alternative conception which is that the meanings of words and propositions are largely self-contained. I will not argue that it is the correct and/or sole view that one ought to hold with respect to words or propositions. Instead, I will often this view, in line with a general meta-philosophical methodology (that is, that philosophy may be descriptive, normative, or what have you but it also *creative* – a repository for ideas that are presently useful or even better a potent reservoir for ideas, or portfolio of them, that have yet to find their time).

[1] **Revision 0.0.2 – 9.2.18** - https://www.linkedin.com/in/adamintaegerard/

2.0 Propositional Abstraction

Words contain their own *meaning* and *relations*. Insofar as there is meaning, so are words *necessary* though specific symbol – meaning relations are *not* necessary. Combinations of zero or more words create *concepts*. A *word* is just a unit in a language that *expresses* a *meaning*. In certain symbolic systems we call these well-formed-formulae for they need not be *words* at all.

See: Propositional Abstraction.

3.0 Remarks: Natural and Artificial Languages

A great travesty has been to identify these special language systems with natural language systems for they are not the same.

These are free-standing and interrelated by being viewed and combined with other languages in various ways.

4.0 Remarks: Data Structures and Analysis

Most of analytic philosophy has been conducted through the continued obsession with *sets*. There are numerous other data structures that are far more interesting – these are lessons brought back into Philosophy from Computer Science (which like every science was spawned within philosophy and spun off and like every science its independent ideas largely ignored by philosophers ever since).