

HATTIANGADI: IS MEANING NORMATIVE?

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Meaning has correctness conditions

from is to ought:

The *fact that* a speaker means something by a term *t* determines that she *ought to* apply the term to *f*

i.e., what someone means by a term determines how she ought to use it

to describe how things are,

or

to prescribe what to do

Meaning Platitute

if *t* means *F* then (x) (*t* applies correctly to *x* iff *x* is *f*)

Does following a rule to mean sth by a term make meaning normative?

-- Only if the rule is prescriptive, as opposed to descriptive.

The Prescriptivity Principle

if I mean *f* by *t* then I ought to apply *t* to something iff it is an *f*

Speakers ought to speak the truth

Hypothetical prescription/obligation

means-end

if goal *G*, (to achieve *G*) then do *A* /*G* is optional/

Categorical prescription/obligation

the consequent is a condition of the antecedent /is entailed by/

Pragmatics

When not speaking the truth does not amount to making a mistake

exs. tell a lie; be ironic; metaphor; sarcasm; ...

However I use term *t*, it will be correct in application to something iff it is a *f*.

To add that I ought to apply *t* only if it is correct to do so is empty (vacuous).

Norms and Social Practice e.g. Brandom

Meaning is social

Correctness conditions depend on communal agreement

Communal agreement creates obligation, like promising /cf. illocutionary speech act, Austin and Searle/

Discursive normative statuses concern commitment and entitlement that the use of concepts involve. Discursive norms are instituted by social practices.

- language and intentionality are normative
- such norms are understood in terms of practices (pragmatism)
- such norms are essentially social

AH: But why think there are semantic obligations of this kind??

The Contractual Theory of Understanding e.g. Kripke, Wright, McDowell

”to learn the meaning of a term is to acquire an understanding that obliges us subsequently to judge and speak in certain determinate ways”

in order to mean something by *t* the speaker must be committed not merely to use *t* in the standard way, but to actually meet the standard /the speaker must not *fail* to meet it/

HA: This assumption makes it impossible to use language to lie

HA Conclusion: Semantic rules are meaning constituting, but semantic rules are not prescriptive.