

## INFERENCE AND MEANING

### The Domain of Meanings: Meanables, Intendables, Believables

In order to start a more comprehensive analysis of meanings, let us take a very simple example of a meaning statement. (After all, if you want to explore what meaning is, you consider sentences involving it and examine the meaning of these sentences.) We have sentences of the following form:

- (1) Certain expression (in a certain language) means something.

Meaning statements of this sort are used fundamentally to explain meanings of words. We have already seen that a definition, in the very broad sense, can be regarded as a technique for explaining the meaning of a word, explaining how a word is used. There are many kinds of definitions and all kinds of ways of explaining the meaning of a word: e.g., by examples, by pointing. We concentrated our attention earlier on “analyzing definitions,” definitions which, as it were, unpack the meaning of a term by using expressions for components. The classical illustration, for example,

a triangle is a plane figure bounded by three straight lines

contains the words ‘triangle’, ‘three’, ‘plane figure’, ‘bounded’, ‘straight’, ‘line’, and, in a plausible sense, the phrase on the right hand side is “a spelling out,” an unpacking of what is carried in the suitcase of the word which is being defined. Let us return to the broad notion of explaining the meaning of a word and the idea that, in a broad sense, meaning statements can be regarded as definitions. Although it does not occur in the specific case of analyzing definitions, we presuppose, in general, that somebody understands

what is on the right hand side of the “means” schema, (1), above. It is a situation in which we are saying a certain expression in a certain language means something; the meaning statement presupposes that you are at home in the context of that language.

Let me explain that point in terms of a very simple example:

(2) ‘und’ (in German) means *and*.

To somebody who does not know what ‘and’ is, or how the word ‘and’ is used, (2) would not be very helpful; it is very important to realize, then, that meaning statements can be effective only if the person who hears it understands what is on the right after the word ‘means’. If you understand the way in which the word ‘and’ functions, you get a grip on how the German word ‘und’ functions in German: that is the essential point to bear in mind in everything that follows. It is very important that the word ‘and’ be in the vocabulary (the active, understood vocabulary) of the person who is going to hear the sentence. If the person does not have the word ‘and’ in his vocabulary, (2) is not helpful.

Suppose that I say that ‘und’ in German means the same as ‘va’ in early Sanskrit. That is interesting information but unless you know early Sanskrit, it does not help you very much. Nevertheless, if I say that ‘und’ in German means the same as ‘va’ in early Sanskrit, that gives you some information. It is not presupposing that you know early Sanskrit. You can be perfectly at home with the statement “‘und’ in German means the same as ‘va’ in early Sanskrit” even though you do not know early Sanskrit. This marks the difference between ‘means the same as’ and ‘means’. A categorical meaning statement does not simply tell you that one expression in one language has the same function as another expression in another language; it is concentrating on what you have in your own language. Thus, the difference between “‘und’ in German means *and*” and “‘und’ in German means the same as ‘va’ in early Sanskrit” is that the latter statement will get you to the same point if you are an expert in early Sanskrit, but the former directly presupposes that you already, here and now, have the word ‘and’ in your language.

Let us concentrate on the following sentence as a paradigm because if we really understand this very simple case, most of the puzzles about meanings and the domain of meanings will disappear:

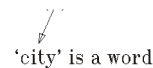
‘und’ (in German) means *and*.

Notice that this schema looks as though it had a simple relational form,  $xRy$ . Remember, in the very first section, I said that thinking of something is similar in form to *kicking a ball*. There is the *kicker*, the *kicking*, the *kickee*. What do we have here? The *meaner*, the *meaning*, and the *meanee*. *Und* is the *meaner*, *means* is the *meaning* and, finally, *and* as the *meanee*. It looks as though we have a relational statement asserting that a word and something are related: they stand in a *meaning relation*.

Is meaning a relation? This is the crucial issue which we want to be absolutely clear about because I am going to end up saying that meaning is not a relation.<sup>1</sup>

This claim is not news, but we want to understand well what the meaning schema is if it is not relational. What job does the word ‘means’ do if it, like ‘kicking’, is not standing for a relation? First of all, then, we want to understand the subject ‘und’. We always have to specify, of course, what language a word exists in because words work only in the system of a language; it is a trivial point but it will turn out to be philosophically important, as most straightforward, obvious points do. ‘Und’ is the subject, ‘means’ the verb, and the complement is ‘and’. Let us look at each of these in turn while forgetting the specific context.

Quotation



I want to begin by looking at quoting generally. What is it that we do when we quote an expression? We form a name (in some sense of ‘name’). Consider the following sentence:

Figure 1.1 (a) - a singular term.

(3) ‘city’ (in English) is a word.

This is a sentence in which the verb is in the singular. After all, we do not say, “‘city’ *are* a word,” do we? We have the verb ‘is’ and, in addition, what I referred to initially as a singular term. Recall that a

<sup>1</sup> Editor’s note: As I indicated at the end of the last lecture (*fn*), Sellars turns to an analysis of the logic of ‘means’. The present lecture, therefore, elaborates *section VII* of “Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind,” (*SPR*, 161ff), and relates it with themes found in “Grammar and Existence: a Preface to Ontology,” (*SPR*, 247ff). The theory of meaning about to appear resembles that currently known as the “network theory of meaning” and can be found discussed in Churchland’s *Matter and Consciousness*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1984) and Dennett’s *The Intentional Stance*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987).

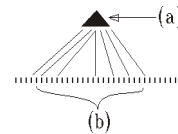
singular term is a referring expression which is followed by a verb in the singular. I want you to keep in the back of your mind *figure 1.1* which illustrates that the paradigm for a singular term is a name. Thus the temptation is to say, straight away, that what we have in a quoted expression, (a), is the name of a certain word. Where is the word 'city' to be found? Right between the quotes. We might say that there is a plausible sense in which you form the name of the word by taking a sample of that word and enclosing it in quotation marks. By taking a token of the word 'city', an instance or an example of the word 'city', and embracing it with quotation marks, you can form the name of the word in order to allow you to talk about that word. This is a plausible move and there is some truth in it.

But there is also a danger hovering around here because it will emerge that what I just said is false. We do not really have a name of a word. Let me bring this point out as follows. We have been operating with a straightforward acceptance of qualities, relations, and universals as

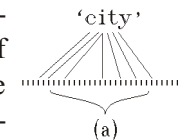
they are traditionally called. In association with this, a nice little picture is in the back of our mind like the one in *figure 1..2*. Here is triangularity, (a). One of the important things we said about triangularity is that it is something that many objects can have: it is a quality. Suppose that we have here, (b), a hundred thousand triangles. Each one of those is something with that particular quality; and, by virtue of having that particular quality, they necessarily do not have the character rectangularity. What we have, then, is many instances, or examples, of the quality triangularity. You will remember how a certain theory of *a priori* knowledge is built on the idea that if there are qualities and if the mind could *zap* (apprehend) them and catch hold of the incompatibility or implication involved, one would get a grip on all the objects that have that quality.

*Figure 1..3* illustrates that there are many examples, or instances, of the word 'city'. We might claim that just as all triangles have triangularity in common, so

city, city, city,



**Figure 1.2** (a) Triangularity. (b) Individual instances: triangles.

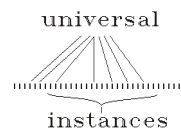


**Figure 1.3** (a) Individual instances.

have a certain quality in common, viz., the quality of being the kind of word in the figure. Our picture would represent that there are many instances and, in addition, that the quoted expression is a way of naming a quality or characteristic which is exemplified many times by these particular occurrences of the word. The quoted expression is the name of a universal just as ‘triangularity’ is the name of a universal exemplified by many instances.

In *figure 1..4*, we find the classical way of looking at the situation where we have the name of a certain *word universal*. Thus, ‘city’ is a word is to be treated something like *triangularity is a quality*. In the present case, we have the name of a linguistic characteristic of which there would be many examples.

Naturally, we are familiar with the idea that words for universals, qualities and relations are singular terms; the universals involved traditionally appear as, or are construed as, named. ‘Triangularity’ is the name of a quality of which there are many instances. ‘City’ is the name of an attribute of which there are many instances.



**Figure 1.2 A**  
universal with instances.

Philosophers have tended to think that what we have here is a special way of forming a name for a universal: namely, in this case we form the name of the linguistic universal by taking an example and quoting it.

Consider our paradigm name, ‘Tom’. We have in mind a particular boy, Tom, who lives on the corner in our part of town. We tend, then, to assume that

Tom, triangularity, and ‘city’

are names of objects. ‘Tom’ is the name of a concretum, a spatial temporal object located on the block down the street; ‘triangularity’ is the name of an abstract entity; “‘city’” is a name of an attribute which is to be found in the context of a particular language, but it is still something that is a universal with respect to the many examples in our picture.

“‘und’” and ‘the lion’

There is an alternative way of looking at this situation which will have very significant repercussions throughout almost everything we have had to say. I want you to get away from thinking that,

in “‘city’ is a word,” there is the name of a word universal. We do, indeed, have a singular term, but it is a special kind of singular term, a non-name: a singular term which is not a name. We will get away from the name paradigm of looking at singular terms. To this end, I will use an example which I have often used and which I still think has significant merits. Suppose that I say,

(4) the lion is a tawny beast.

We have here an ‘is’ and we have a singular term, ‘the lion’. Similarly, in the list below,

the lion is a tawny beast  
 the elephant is a remembering animal  
 the flea is an irritating creature

we have singular terms. But notice when we say that the lion is a tawny beast, we are not talking about *lioninity*, or *lionhood* or the property of being a lion: the property of being a lion is not tawny. Lions are tawny—whatever properties are, they do not have colors. Thus, we find a singular term, but it is a very special kind of singular term. It is a singular term because it is followed by ‘is’. Note that we could also have said:

(5) a lion is a tawny beast.

We might find ‘the lion’ or ‘a lion’: there are a number of locutions we could use, all of which are properly followed by a verb in the singular. Again, if I said (5), I would not be talking about the property of being a lion. What *am* I doing?

In a way, I am availing myself of a special device for formulating a general truth. To say “a lion is a tawny beast” is a way of generalizing about lions, an interesting way of making a general statement. It is an important fact that in English we can use statements in the singular in order to make a general claim. We use sentences having the verb ‘is’ in order to make what, in effect, is a general statement which would otherwise be of a form which includes ‘lions are’. Sentences (4) and (5) are a way of saying “lions are tawny” and they mean, roughly (other things being equal), “Show me a lion and I’ll show you a tawny animal.” Granted, there are scruffy lions, lions that have been exposed to paint spray cans, lions that have been unfortunate enough to get played around with.

But when we say, “You know, the lion is a tawny beast,” we are allowing for the fact that there are some scruffy lions that have been manhandled, painted and so on. We are, in a way, making a generalization which allows for certain kinds of exceptions. If I say “a man is a biped” and somebody trots out someone who went through the last war and has only one leg, nobody says, “Aha! wrong, you are refuted. A man is not a biped; there is an example of a man who isn’t a biped; he’s got only one leg.” It is the kind of “*ceteris paribus*,” “other things being equal,” sort of thing which is so important, not only in rhetoric but in commonsense. Hence, other things being equal, ‘a lion is a tawny beast’ tells us that lions are tawny beasts; that is the kind of generalization that is not refuted by trotting out a painted lion, or a shaved lion. Once you get the idea that you can make a statement that has a general import by using a sentence which has a singular verb, you are close to something which is philosophically very important.

Look back at the sentence,

(3) ‘city’ (in English) is a word.

Initially, we construed this so that ‘city’ is the name of an abstract entity, the name of a certain attribute which is exemplified by

city, city, city.

At this point, I want you to think of the sentence (3), as analogous to,

(4) the lion is a tawny beast

so that (3) is really a way of talking about examples of the word ‘city’. In other words, you might put it this way,

(6) ‘city’s (in English) are words.

We are not talking about an abstract attribute, we are simply generalizing, making a general claim about all examples of the word ‘city’: namely, other things being equal, they are words.

Of course, suppose you are strolling out on the desert and the sand has been blown nicely by the wind so that the shape in *figure 1..5* appears in the sand. Is that a word? You might say it has the same shape as the word ‘city’ in English. But is it really a word? When we think of something as a word in the primary sense, we

think of it as functioning in a certain way in communication and in the expression of ideas by persons. You might say, “Well, when you come across this shape in the desert, it is a word but only in an extended sense.” That is, it has the same shape as a word, and perhaps there is a beast out here who blows and is communicating by means of the wind. Perhaps the clouds might one day form the phrase, “City, get out of the city!” It might be that Yahweh is angry; get out of the city. For a while, you might say that it is an interesting wind that blew and, after a time, you might begin to get nervous, and you might get out of the city: that would be treating it as a word. Otherwise, it is just a word by analogy and extension. In the primary sense, a word is something that exists in a context such that it is functioning linguistically as a means of expressing an idea. Let us look at

(3) ‘city’ (in English) is a word

and take that to mean

(6) ‘city’s (in English) are words,

or,

(7) a ‘city’ (in English) is a word,

or,

(8) the ‘city’ (in English) is a word.

They are all expressing the general truth that examples which are ‘city’s (in English) are words. What use is that to us? Let us look, once again, at the problem that we are dealing with.

We started out with our paradigm of a meaning statement

(2) ‘und’ (in German) means *and*

and our temptation was to think that this has the form

[*Name*] [*verb* (in singular)] [*complement*]

Obviously, if we take a clue from (3), the first part (‘und’) is not a name, rather, it is a way of making a general statement about

und, und, und

in German. When a German, in the normal course of human events, is creating an ‘und’ as in “Und ich will nach Deutschland morgen gehen,” he is using the word ‘und’ and he is using it as a functioning expression in the German language. When we say

(2) ‘und’ (in German) means *and*

what we are saying, in effect, is that when Germans use the word ‘und’ in the normal course of communicating conversation, they are using something which corresponds to what we do when we use the word ‘and’ in the normal course of discussions as, for example, in “And then I went to town, and I caught the bus.” There is a certain parallel between the way that ‘und’ functions in German and the way that ‘and’ functions in our language. We are looking at a way of summing this up so that we can rephrase (2) without using the name but simply say

(9) an ‘und’ (in German) means *and*

or,

(10) ‘und’s (in German) mean *and*.

We are concentrating on the first part of the statement because we are getting away from a certain picture. Wittgenstein correctly said that in philosophy we are often captured by a picture and we tend to construe everything in terms of that picture. We have the “name” picture, and now we are getting away from the name picture. When we are saying “‘und’ (in German) means *and*,” we are really saying (10) and that takes us one-third of the way.

‘Means *and*’ and ‘Means ‘and’

At this point, we want to turn to the other half of the schema: “means *and*.” We will not take the word ‘means’ first because that is the \$64,000 question; we will try to figure out how the word ‘*and*’ is functioning. In the very beginning, I indicated how it functions when I said the important thing about the word ‘and’ is that it is an expression that we already know how to use. How does the word ‘and’ work? You use the word ‘and’ to make a big sentence out of two little ones. We take the sentence ‘Tom is tall’ and the sentence ‘Tom is carefree’ and we put the word ‘and’ in there in order to get the big sentence, ‘Tom is tall and Tom is carefree.’ You know that

the sentence that we get stands in a very interesting relation to the component sentences. What is the relation? The big sentence is true just in case both of the constituent sentences are true: ‘P and Q’ is true just in case both ‘P’ is true and ‘Q’ is true. This is a very familiar point: we can begin to tell people how the word ‘and’ actually functions by mentioning things like this.

How does the word ‘not’ function? Suppose that I say “Tom is tall” and you say, “Tom is not tall.” You have taken my sentence and you have made a bigger one by adding the word ‘not’. Is there a simple relation between my sentence and your sentence? There is a very simple one: namely, if my sentence is true, yours is false. And if yours is true, mine is false. The same sort of relation appears in the case of words like ‘and’, ‘or’, ‘not’, and words like ‘all’, ‘some’, and all of these other logical words that we talked about. We can explain in some detail how these words function and what job you accomplish by using them.

When we understand the meaning of a word, usually we can spell out how the word is used, explicitly. But suppose I said

(9) an ‘und’ (in German) means *and*.

In other words,

(10) ‘und’s (in German) mean *and*.

What I am drawing upon is your ability to spell out how you use the word ‘and’. I might also say

(11) ‘nicht’ (in German) means *not*.

Again, this draws on your ability because it assumes that you can spell out, in some detail, the way in which the word ‘not’ functions in your language. Sentence (10) does not spell out *how* ‘and’ is used or how you (the person to whom the sentence is addressed) use ‘and’. It simply mobilizes your ability to *do* it. Consequently, this sentence really tells you, “By golly! if you want to understand how the word ‘und’ functions in German, sit home, brew a pot of coffee, and figure how you use the word ‘and,’ what job it does in your language, and then you’ll have the idea of the kind of job that is done in German by ‘und’.” Similarly, if I say

(11) ‘nicht’ (in German) means *not*,

I am not telling you how ‘not’ is used. I’m not even telling you how ‘nicht’ is used; but “Sit home, brew a cup of coffee, and figure out how the word ‘not’ functions in your language and then you will get a glimpse of how the word ‘nicht’ functions in German.” It is quite straightforward. What we have, then, is a way of calling attention to a word in the hearer’s language which functions in a certain way.

Turn your attention, once again, to the sentence

(12) ‘und’ (in German) means the same as ‘va’ (in early Sanskrit).

In a way, it gives you somewhat the same instructions, but it does not really presuppose that you know early Sanskrit. It provides a person with a nice piece of linguistic information. In the domain of the meaning statements, it would not have gotten him to home plate until some helpful persons says to him that

(13) ‘va’ (in early Sanskrit) means *and*.

This reflects the difference between *means the same as* and *means*. The *means* schema gives you a word which is assumed to be in your functioning vocabulary, with which you can sit right down and work while *means the same as* is indirect: it is leading you on because you cannot cash *means the same as* into actual utility until some helpful person with a dictionary says (13).

Nevertheless, there is something important that these two contexts have in common. It is obvious that the German word ‘und’ is being mentioned. In addition, *in a certain way*, you are mentioning the word on the right hand side. We might be tempted to say

(14) ‘und’ (in German) means ‘and’.

As you can see, I have put a quote around the *and*. There is nothing wrong about that. But you must beware of moving to

(15) ‘und’ (in German) means ‘and’ (in English)

and then assimilating that to

(16) ‘und’ (in German) means the same as ‘and’  
(in English).

This takes us back, you see, to our Sanskrit case. There is a unique functioning that is going on in (14). It is not wrong to say “‘und’ (in

German) means ‘and’” but it overlooks the fact that when it is said, we are at the end of the whole meaning game where it is presupposed that the word ‘and’ is not in any old language, but in your language—the person to whom the meaning statement is addressed. Thus, we can say,

- (14) ‘und’ (in German) means ‘and’
- (9a) an ‘und’ (in German) means ‘and’
- (10a) ‘und’s (in German) mean ‘and’.

But it is necessary to remember the difference between ‘means’ and ‘means the same as’.

### ‘Means’ and Classification

The next point to bear in mind concerns ‘means’. We started out with this picture:

meaner—meaning—meanee

and we have been examining the results. I want to take a different view. We can begin by asking what kind of a word is the *and* in (9)? Is it the name of an abstract entity: *and-hood*, *and-ity*? Let us try to work with it in the same way that we worked with “‘city’” and “‘und’”. In this case, we can make a fresh start with a variant of (9a):

- (17) an ‘und’ (in German) means an ‘and’.

This is a funny statement but we are doing philosophical reconstruction and, when you are half way through the philosophical reconstruction, you are often limping along; one foot is advanced to the new insight and one foot is just dragging; you have not quite pulled it up yet—but this is getting close. Having (17) to work with, we are now in a position to understand how the word *means* functions: what the word ‘mean’ means.

Anybody with intuitions, or a feeling for structure, is toying already with the idea that there is a close relation between (17) and

- (18) an ‘und’ (in German) *is* an ‘and’.

All that I have been leading up to is contained right here in the transition between these two. Ask yourself “What are we doing when we say that ‘und’ (in German) means *and*,” and you will see

that we are giving a kind of classification of the German word ‘und’. We are classifying it in a broad class along with the French ‘et’ and words in other languages which all function in the same way. The key theme is that of functional classification: meaning statements classify functionally.

Consider the parallel between the two questions “What is it to be an ‘and’?” and “What is it to be a lion?” First of all, to be a lion is to be something which belongs to the genus *Felis* and belongs to a specific species under that genus—we are giving a classification. Certain words are words with which we classify things. Biologically ‘rat’, ‘moose’, ‘lion’, or, in the case of vegetables, ‘lettuce’, ‘a carrot’, ‘turnip’, ‘bean’, are classifying words which have criteria allowing you to go out and say “Is that a lion? Well, you know it’s about the size of a lion; it has the structure of a lion; it has the teeth of a lion... we better get out of here!” In any event, there are criteria which you can use to determine whether or not something falls in a certain classification.

Some classifications are not purely functional. You do not classify lions functionally; you classify them biologically and genetically in terms of their relationship to other animals of other kinds. But some classifications are functional, e.g., a camshaft. What is it to be a camshaft? To be a camshaft is to function in a certain way. What is it to be a putter in golf? It is to be something that functions in a certain way and used for a certain purpose in golf. What is it to be a pawn in chess? It is to be a piece that functions in a certain way in accordance with the rules of chess. You explain what a pawn is by spelling out how pawns function in a game of chess, in terms of what they can do and what they cannot do.

What I want to suggest is that when we say that

(18) an ‘und’ (in German) is an ‘and’

the phrase on the right is a functional classifier. That is why it is really a very *special* case of mentioning a word and it helps explain why we feel uneasy about using ordinary quotation to enclose the *and*. As we ordinarily use quotation marks, what are the sorts of things that can be ‘and’s’? I will give you some examples:

- a) and and and and and and and and
- b) I went downtown *and* I bought a coat *and* I got the bus *and* I came home in time.

These are ‘and’s and in any normal sense ‘und’s (in German) are not ‘and’s because, for one thing, they don’t sound the same. This shows why we are, indeed, mentioning the word ‘and’, but we are doing it in a very special kind of way: we create a classifier by using a word in our language which performs a certain function and thus the classifier classifies by that kind of function. That is why we should introduce some special quotes on the right, like those below

(19) an ‘und’ (in German) means an and

Special quotes indicate that we are not concerned with the noises involved, the shapes, or the sign design; we are concerned with function. We are using the word ‘and’ to form a functional classifier: we are interested in the function of the word ‘and’ and not what it sounds like. Consequently, when we say

(2) ‘und’ (in German) means *and*,

we are mentioning the word ‘and’ but doing it in a very special way. We are using a sample of the word to form an expression which is a functional classifier and allows us to say such things as

(18) an ‘und’ (in German) is an ‘and’

(18’) an ‘et’ (in French) is an ‘and’.

Philosophically this is of the utmost importance. We start out with a sentence that looks as though we were talking about a meaning relation between a word and an object and what we see is that we are giving a functional classification of a German word, namely, those that sound roughly like ‘und’. Consequently, the word ‘means’ really is a specialized use of the verb ‘is’. And (2) is similar in form to

x is a K

which is the form for statements that contain a sortal expression (*a K*), a referring expression, and the ‘is’. Such statements are not relational statements; they are classifying statements. There is no meaning relation, not because we should feel that there is something funny about meaning relations and say, “Let’s throw meaning out,” but because the “deeper grammar” of meaning statements shows that meaning is not a relation. It is simply the good old verb

‘to be’ specialized in the context of dictionary statements. We started out with

(2) an ‘und’ (in German) means *and*

and we end up with

(18) an ‘und’ (in German) is an ‘and’

where we have “‘and’” acting as a functional classifier which I call an *illustrating functional classifier*. Why do I call it an “illustrating functional classifier?” Because we are forming a sortal for objects having a certain function. The resources for forming that sortal involve something in our own language which plays that function.

This is precisely what I claimed from the beginning, and all I have done is to dress it up in nice systematic terminology. Meaning statements do not talk about relations between words and entities; they classify words within languages with respect to our own base language. A meaning statement takes a word in our own language which functions in a certain way and from that word it forms a classifier which can then be applied to German words, French words, Italian words, Russian words, and so on. Thus, (2) has the form

(20) ‘und’s (in German) are and s

What else would one expect a meaning statement to do? All we are doing is de-mystifying meaning statements: a very fashionable activity in which I indulge with pleasure.

‘Means’ and ‘Stands for’

However, the story is bigger. Suppose that you say “Okay, “‘und’ (in German) means *and*” tells us that (other things being equal) when an ‘und’ occurs in German, it functions as do ‘and’s in our language.” You are all convinced that what I say is absolutely true. It seems so non-controversial. Who could get interested in it? You are aware, now, that the idea that meaning is a relation is a hodge-podge of philosophical confusion while the notion that meaning is functional classification is obviously fine. I will assume that you are all convinced. Now I want you to think about another kind of meaning statement, equally subject to mystery, which I want to de-mystify. This is a somewhat more difficult task which I will have to complete in two stages.

Consider the philosophy that is written about the idea that certain words stand for qualities, relations, and attributes; it is almost infinite.<sup>2</sup> Take a simple example

(21) ‘dreieckig’ (in German) stands for triangularity.

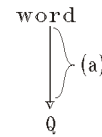
In *figure 1.6*, we find the picture associated with this. Here is a quality Q, triangularity, which is an entity in the domain of intelligibles, the domain of Platonic ideas, the domain with which, as we have seen, the rationalists play. We also see the word ‘dreieckig’ which stands for it: the word stands for the quality. We have

word *standing for* quality

which contains a *stander for*, *standing*, and the *stood for* just as we had a “kicker, kicking, kickee”. Relations appear, once again, to be bursting out all over, but I think that we are captured by a false illusion here.<sup>3</sup>

We want to make the same move that we made before. (21) is a way of making a general statement about occasions in which a certain guttural explosion occurs in conversation between Germans: “Dreieckig ist dreieckig fur mir” and so forth.

The Platonist’s temptation is to say that ‘dreieckig’ (in German) stands for triangularity: “Well, that’s what the job of ‘dreieckig’ in German is; it’s to stand for triangularity.” There is the entity triangularity which the German word stands for and which the English word ‘triangularity’ stands for. Since we encounter the phrase ‘word standing for quality,’ we want to look at ‘stands for’ and the word ‘triangularity’. We have been working comfortably with the idea that the word ‘triangularity’ is a name of an abstract entity, a quality. Let us get away from that picture since we have a recipe in hand for an alternative approach.



**Figure 1.3** A shape in the sand.

<sup>2</sup> Editor’s note: This begins the analysis of the tie between the logic of ‘means’ and the ontology presupposed by classical epistemology. A related discussion is found in “Grammar and Existence: a Preface to Ontology,” (*SPR*) as well as in “Abstract Entities,” (*PP*). Sellars cited Carnap’s *Logical Syntax of Language* as pointing out the close connection between the pair ‘triangularity is a quality’ and ‘triangular’ is an adjective’.

<sup>3</sup> In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein recognized that the adjective ‘triangular’ is not a disguised name.

I would not say “triangularity are a fascinating thing;” I would say “triangularity is a fascinating thing.” So the word ‘triangularity’ is clearly a singular term. But is it a name? Almost all of the history of philosophy has been built on the assumption that either triangularity is a snare and delusion or it is a name. Quine would say, “Let’s expunge ‘triangularity’ from our vocabulary. Let’s not countenance it. If it’s anything, it’s the name of a Platonic idea. Of course, you know and I know that there aren’t any Platonic ideas; so let’s expunge it. Let’s not talk in that way.” I want to suggest that that is being rude and unkind to a word that has a nice function and was doing its job, in a modest way, until it was put on a pedestal by philosophers. I suggest that the word ‘triangularity’ is a special kind of singular term.

Let me introduce the expression which I have avoided up until now: *distributive singular term*. Why do I speak of a distributive singular term and contrast it with a name? Look at

(2) ‘und’ (in German) means *and*.

We said this “und” is a singular term. So why do I want to call it a distributive singular term? Because it is a singular term that enables us to make a general statement about all the objects of a certain kind. If I say,

(4) the lion is a tawny beast,

I am not talking about an entity called “the lion.” I am making a general statement about all lions (other things being equal). In consequence, my statement is, as it were, distributive over all lions. It is not mentioning an entity called “the lion;” it is a way of talking about lions. Therefore, I call words like “und” in (2), and words like ‘the lion’, distributive singular terms. To use a sentence which begins with a distributive singular term is to use a sentence in which you are making a general claim: roughly, other things being equal, a lion is tawny; other things being equal, a German ‘und’, when it occurs, is functioning in a certain way.

I will suggest, then, a strategy for looking at these fancy abstract words like ‘triangularity’ and all these words ending in ‘-ity’, ‘-hood’, and ‘-ness’. Philosophy would have died a long time ago if it had not been for these wonderful suffixes. In any event, ‘-ity’, ‘-hood’, ‘-ness’, are abstract suffixes which look as though they

form names. I will demystify these suffixes by showing that they are ways of forming distributive singular terms—they are not ways of forming names.

What distributive singular term is there in the neighborhood? Consider the sentence below

(22) a ‘dreieckig’ (in German) is a triangular .

We have already made this move with respect to meaning statements:

(23) ‘dreieckig’ (in German) means *triangular*

is

(22) a ‘dreieckig’ (in German) is a triangular

which is a functional classification. If you want to understand how ‘dreieckig’ in German works, brew your pot of coffee and go home and figure out how the word ‘triangular’ works in your own language. The demystification consists in the claim that

(21) ‘dreieckig’ (in German) stands for triangularity

is just a sophisticated version of (23).

I am arguing that when you get to a more penetrating level of analysis, they are identical. Statement (21) really tells us that

(24) ‘dreieckig’s (in German) are triangular s.

When you are talking about a word standing for a quality or standing for a universal, you are still giving a functional classification. So, (21) amounts to (24).<sup>4</sup>

Can it really be that simple? The obvious objection that occurs to anybody at this point is that, if (21) says the same thing as (23), why in the devil would we have both? That is what is strange. Anybody who takes this line has to say, “Well, there has to be a reason why we have two ways of functionally classifying expressions in foreign languages in terms of our own.” This brings us to the second half of the task of demystifying qualities and relations.

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<sup>4</sup> When we use abstract singular terms, the reference is to *expressions* not to extra-linguistic entities and to talk about entailment relations between abstract entities is to talk about moves accepted as proper between linguistic expressions. Thus, Carnap’s claim (*fn* above) is, in essence, that we do not need *meanings* as entities in addition to language. We see that “meaning” statements are *translation* statements.

We have addressed about 90% of the matter, but there is a special use for these abstract terms which is a use other than the one they have in the explanation of meaning. There are two kinds of contexts in which words like ‘triangularity’ occur.<sup>5</sup> One context is:

(a) ‘\_\_\_\_\_’ stands for triangularity.

But there is another kind of context where we come up against one of the most bone-breaking problems in philosophy, the problem of truth. The other context in which ‘triangularity’ occurs is

(b) object *O* has triangularity.

We say of a certain object *O* that it has, exemplifies, is an instance of, partakes of, or participates in triangularity. And it is the two-faced-ness of these words that gives them a function in addition to the mere meaning-explaining function upon which I was concentrating. In one dimension, “word stands for quality” is another way of expressing “word means something.” They have the same job. But in another dimension, words for qualities are used in contexts where we speak of things as having the qualities. These, then, are the two kinds of contexts in which abstract words occur.

Contexts like (b) are ones in which we encounter the classical problem of participation. I will argue that this turns out to be the same thing as the problem of truth: that when I say that *a* has triangularity, I am saying that there is a certain truth about *a*, viz., that it is triangular. So, in order to understand how ‘triangularity’ is functioning in contexts like (b), we have to come face to face with the problem of truth. As we shall see, even in this context, I will argue that it is still functioning as a distributive singular term, not as a name of a Platonic form.

## Thinking and Linguistic Representationalism

At the end of last section, I was emphasizing that, traditionally, abstract words like ‘triangularity’, ‘justice’, ‘normalcy’, ‘pleasantness’, and ‘manhood’ have been taken to be names of objects, in

<sup>5</sup> Sellars has explained one part of the puzzle: “\_\_\_ means \_\_\_” and “\_\_\_ stands for \_\_\_”, now he must explain “\_\_\_ has \_\_\_” to be able to say how beliefs correspond to facts (one reason why Chusholm and Russell treat these items as labels). He is putting together pieces for an answer to the question raised earlier. Properties are constituents of facts, Sellars gives a theory of how we get at properties, now, he will say how we get at facts.

that very broad sense of ‘object’ in which a name stands for an object, objects are referred to by names and so forth. We started out by thinking of a paradigm of an object as being a concretum, but we have been working right along with this broader sense of ‘object’ which includes other sorts of objects as well: attributes, qualities and relations. We are not confined to names formed by suffixes; we also have, for example, *that it is raining*, *that Philadelphia will win the Eastern Division* and the like. Generally speaking, we have treated *that-p* as a name. The line I was developing was that, traditionally, expressions of this kind have been taken to be names or putative names for special kinds of objects. Those who think that there are no such objects, at this point, say, “Let’s dispense with these names.” I was arguing against this by showing that they are ways of forming what I called “functionally classifying expressions.”

Let us take our example

(21) ‘dreieckig’ (in German) stands for triangularity.

Traditionally, this would have been interpreted as saying that a certain German expression is a label, if you will, or has some kind of quasi-label hook-up with an object, triangularity. By extending to ‘triangularity’ a move I had already made in discussing the subjects of sentences, I argued that ‘triangularity’ is not a name, that it is a way of classifying ‘dreieckig’s in German: ‘dreieckig’s in German do the same thing in German as ‘triangular’s do in English:

(24) ‘dreieckig’s (in German) are triangular s

where the dot-quoted ‘triangular’ is a kind of classifying word which applies to anything in any language which does approximately the job that is done in our language by what is illustrated between the dot quotes. Instead of this sentence telling us that a certain expression is a label of a certain object, it is really classifying certain expression occurrences or events which occur in the neighborhood of the Rhine.

#### Classification and Linguistic Patterns

This raises the question: how does ‘triangular’ function in our language? Or, looking at it with our sharpened eyes, how *do* ‘triangular’s function in our language? Traditionally, this question would have been answered, “‘triangular’s function in our language

to stand for triangularity.” But we have cut ourselves off from that nice tidy answer—a key move. The function of ‘dreieckig’ is not to stand for triangularity. What is its function? It is the same function that our word ‘triangular’ has. And that is neither to stand for triangularity nor to label an object. It is to function in a certain way that is constituted by the pattern of inferences that the word ‘triangular’ is bound up with, its relations to certain other words, its belonging to a system of other words to which it is related in various ways. ‘Triangular’s occur in certain patterns and these are the patterns characteristic of geometrical arguments, geometrical statements, geometrical descriptions and the like.

Let me illustrate this with a simple example: suppose we are playing chess while people have been stealing the pieces from our set so that finally we do not have any pawns left. Well, let’s use pennies. In our game of chess, we might say

(26) pennies (in our game) play the pawn.

I deliberately put (26) in such a way that it looks like “‘dreieckig’s (in German) stand for triangularity.” The same pattern occurs in each:

“\_\_\_\_\_ stands for \_\_\_\_\_”  
 “\_\_\_\_\_ plays \_\_\_\_\_.”

I want to draw an analogy between *standing for* and *plays*. When we say, “Pennies in our game play the pawn” that is a sophisticated way of saying

(27) pennies (in our game) are pawns.

What is it that pawns do? Pick up a penny and toss it; that is not a move in chess. There are rules of chess which you can call the “constitutive rules” of chess, as opposed to the rules of strategy for winning, or the tactics for discomforting a side and so on. The constitutive rules of chess define a sequence of patterns which are admissible and explain what it is to be a pawn in terms of those admissible sequences of patterns. This is obvious in the case of chess. Thus, if someone says, “Pennies in our game play the pawn,” they are saying, “Pennies are governed by certain patterns and if you want to know what those patterns are, well, look at a standard rule book for chess and realize that pennies do that kind of thing in our

game because thieving people have stolen the pieces we usually use as pawns.” The moral is: if you want to know what a pawn is and what it is for something to play the pawn, you look at patterns and sequences of patterns. What I want to suggest is that when we say that “‘dreieckig’ in German stands for triangularity,” we are saying that ‘dreieckig’s (in German) are a certain functional kind of object: they are objects that play a certain functional role. What is that functional role? It is the one played in our language by ‘triangular’s. What is that role? Is it to stand for triangularity? No, the role is given by patterns in which the word occurs. This is the sort of picture I have given you, and I am suggesting that it is a more fruitful picture than the “Del Monte label” picture of words.<sup>6</sup>

In the case of chess, these constitutive uniformities are largely negative in the sense that if there is a certain pattern of pieces on the board, then a certain other pattern will be inappropriate. You cannot get there from here, so to speak, if you are playing chess. Thus, if somebody is playing chess and moves a pawn two places forward, that is fine; but if he moves it five places forward, that is ruled out. That sequence in which a pawn is moved five places forward is not a permissible sequence. And similarly, there is something impermissible about the following sequence: This is triangular; so, it has a round circumference. There is something fishy about that, isn’t there? In fact, it is as fishy as it would be to move a pawn five places up: it is an impermissible sequence with respect to the word ‘triangular’, which is tied in with other words just as pawns are tied in with kings and queens and knights. I want you to think of sequences. If you want to understand the function of a predicate like ‘triangular’, you want to look at the permissible and impermissible sequences in which it is involved with other words in the language. These uniformities, in the case of predicates like ‘triangular’, occur in connection with sequences of the kind we call *inferences*, signaled by ‘so’, ‘therefore’, and so on. However, there are other patterns that are ruled out. For example, you know that words like ‘triangular’ go in sentences and do not function by themselves. As Wittgenstein and Frege emphasized, the basic job for words in language is not done by single words but by sentences. We know there are basic formation rules according to which certain things that

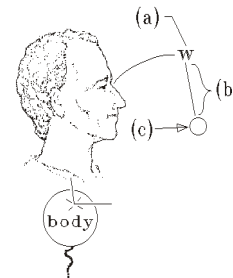
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<sup>6</sup> Key idea: if words are labels, mind is the way you get at the attachment. If we put our stock in meanings, we need to undermine this view by providing an alternative. We need to point out that the mind does not get at abstracta, meanings, forms, whatever.

might look like sentences to start with are ill-formed. For example, consider: Socrates triangular escalator. We have words in there, but they do not fit together: an impermissible structure. You want to look at the structure in which words function. Some structures are regimens in the sense that they concern all predicates, but some structures, as I indicated, are specific to particular words like ‘triangular’ or ‘circular’. “This is a circular triangular” is ruled out. Let us look at a larger context in which this issue becomes even more relevant and important to our problem.

If you have the label theory of words ending in ‘-ity’, ‘-hood’, and ‘-ness’ according to which these words label objects, then you tend to have a misconception about how language functions. You will think of language as containing labels and the mind is, somehow, the source of labels being attached. The basic idea appears in the *figure 1.7* in which the mind apprehends an “object,” (c), putting ‘object’ in scare-quotes there, and then brings it about that words label the objects. This goes along with the idea then that there is a kind of second-class status that words have. By golly! there are these objects which we get at through apprehending or seeing. Having finished with these objects, the whole domain of fascinating objects, we label them and put these labels together to make sentences or to make verbal structures. We have already rejected the idea that words label these abstract objects. I am not saying that there is no such thing as a word that can be a label of a concrete object, but we are talking about abstract objects. There is no

such thing as labeling abstract objects because there are no such things as abstract objects. If we took these words seriously as names, then we would, ipso facto, be thinking of them as naming objects. But we have gotten away from thinking of triangularity as an item, and, therefore, this label picture has been pushed aside. But if you do have that “label-object” conception of words, then you will think of thought as having access to a domain of meanings or a domain of abstract objects, a domain of ideas or forms. A thought deals with that and, then, uses words to convey the thought to others. As we saw when we pictured an intersubjective domain of



**Figure 1.4 ( a )** The stands for relation. Q, a quality.

meanings, on such a model we think of words as instruments for conveying thoughts by means of labels to other people who then have a similar thought or get hold of the same meaning or the same abstract object.<sup>7</sup>

### Thinking and Linguaging

In order to round out this account, we have to say something about thought. After all, what is thought if it is not a grasping of meanings, of intelligibles, a grasping of qualities, relations, truths and propositions?...objects, objects, objects. At this point, I want to put forward a very crude, clumsy, but useful theory. Perhaps it can be polished; but I am not concerned to polish it here. To start with, I will put it forward in all its blatant crudity. This theory is called "verbal behaviorism."

Suppose there is a character called "Jones". He is at a bus stop waiting for a bus. And, lo and behold, there, in the distance, looms a bus with the right number. Jones looks toward the oncoming bus; his eyes are in the appropriate, optical relationship to the bus, watching. He starts getting ready, perhaps inching to the head of the line. But, anyway, the bus steams by; the driver is hungry and he wants to get on with it. Such things happen. Jones is, as it were, poised to get into the bus. The bus whooshes by and he mutters to himself, "Why didn't it stop?" One way of looking at that is to say that, at this particular time, the thought occurred to him and he apprehended the meaning *the bus is not now stopping; the bus didn't stop, didn't stop!* and he is led to having this thought without deliberation, that is to say, "spontaneously." Upon having the thought, he impulsively utters "It didn't stop." We distinguish between the thought, the pure occurrent one that we have been talking about, the immediate belief that the bus did not stop, and the verbalizing, which he impulsively engages in upon having that thought. What is put forward in the simple and blunt theory is that his saying that it did not stop is the thinking that it did not stop; the thought is simply language. This is obviously an absurd view if you put it in that blunt way. But we start out by saying that the thought is simply the utterance as it occurs.

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<sup>7</sup> Now, if the "getting at the Meaning" is not getting at meanings, grasping abstracta, what is it?" Sellars applies the account of ---- means ---- and ---- stands for ---- to thought itself, so he makes the apparatus apply to meanings.

According to verbal behaviorism, the actual verbalizing is the thinking. Now, of course, it is a verbalizing by someone who knows the language, who plays that kind of game, to use Wittgenstein's expression; he's at home in it. But the crucial thing is that, as one who knows the language, he is spontaneously verbalizing. If a parrot did it, of course, it would not be thinking because a parrot's isolated words do not fit in with languagings, the patterns and other sequences in a language. We have to make this concession to get this theory off the ground.

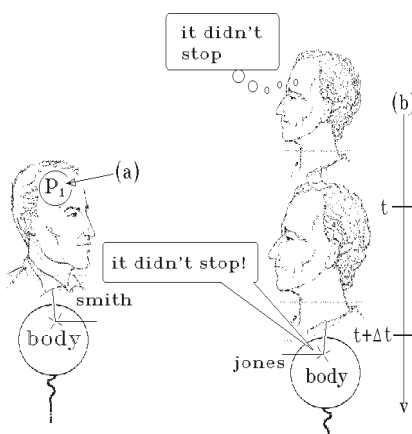
It is obvious that people often think when they are not saying anything, right? That is the obvious objection. Let us bring in Smith now; he always keeps the balance going. You see, Jones is a kind of freewheeling character; he lets himself go while Smith is a kind of tense and nervous character. Smith, too, is waiting for the bus; the same thing happens and the bus goes by. He does not say, "It didn't stop," but if you look at him closely you will be pretty sure it was on the tip of his tongue. We would say, "There is the verbalization;" it does not get out because he is mannerly and he has been brought up to keep his thoughts to himself. According to the verbal behaviorist, he does not give vent to his thoughts. Let me put it this way. You have often watched a kettle or a pot and sometimes it takes a long time to boil. But you might say that there comes a time when it is just on the point of boiling. Of course, if we turn the gas off immediately, it never boils but still, at that particular time, it was on the point of boiling. We will now say that the thought "the bus didn't stop" occurred to Jones and that for Smith the thought "the bus didn't stop" occurred in the sense that the statement would be just on the tip of his tongue; it was a potentiality which was almost let loose into the world.

Notice we have to be very careful because, otherwise, we will start back on false trails. We might put it this way. In *figure 1..8*, we picture Jones, using the cartoonist method, first in a state involving “it didn’t stop.” Then, we picture him as giving up and actually saying “It didn’t stop.” Smith does not say anything, but occurring in him is a *propensity*,  $P_1$ , to verbalize in a certain way. But the propensity does not get actualized. A propensity to say “it didn’t stop” should not be construed as though it were a hidden saying.

When we say that he had the propensity to say, we are not saying that there is a sort of hidden saying as though he were, inside, so to speak, saying “it didn’t stop.” That is all that we will say for the time being.

Consider a bomb; consider it at a distance, but consider it. Suppose it is on the point of exploding when suddenly the Canadian Mounties come up and disarm it. Still, it was on the point of exploding. Obviously, it would be silly to think of a propensity to explode as though it were a hidden explosion. Bombs do not have explosions in this way which they somehow get out in the world. They simply have the propensity to explode given certain conditions. By the same token we have here a propensity which is not a hidden saying. We will say that in each case (Smith and Jones) the thought that the bus did not stop occurred to them. In the case of Jones, it occurred to him overtly; in the case of Smith, it merely got there in the tip-of-tonguish way which involves the existence of an immediate propensity to say something.

Why do I say “immediate propensity” or “proximate propensity?” Let me take a different illustration now. I ask Jones, “What is the capital of Pennsylvania?” He replies, “The capital of Pennsylvania is Harrisburg.” We will say, then, that he thought out loud “Harrisburg is the capital of Pennsylvania.” You might say that I



**Figure 1.5** (a) A word,  $w$ . (b) The word labels the object. (c) The object.

triggered off his thought in the standard conventional kind of way. Let us now consider Smith who believes that Harrisburg is the capital of Pennsylvania, but is asleep. He is lying asleep when I come up to him and say “What is the capital of Pennsylvania?” whereupon he wiggles and squirms. In a certain remote sense, he has the propensity to say “Harrisburg is the capital of Pennsylvania” but it is not right there on the tip of his tongue. In order to get it on the tip of his tongue, we have to throw some water on him, drag him to his feet and ask, “What is the capital of Pennsylvania?” “Harrisburg,” he replies. Thus, you can think of belief as a propensity to think something so that there is a sense in which even when Smith is sleeping, he believes that Harrisburg is the capital of Pennsylvania, and he has the propensity to say it. However, that propensity is remote in the sense that a number of things have to happen before that propensity gets to the tip of the tongue. That is why I am saying that to have a thought occur to one is close to getting, right now, the pure occurring: it is either to think candidly out loud “it didn’t stop” or to have it on the tip of one’s tongue. Whereas to believe is to have the propensity to say, under certain circumstances, “Harrisburg is the capital of Pennsylvania,” where that propensity is remote in the sense that the context would have to be developed a bit in order for that propensity to emerge on the tip of the tongue.

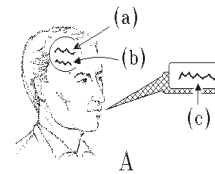
The important thing is that, for the verbal behaviorist, we should not say that language expresses thoughts; we should say that *languagings are thoughts*.<sup>8</sup> But we must also recognize these propensities. There is a sense in which language expresses a thought. For example, Smith had the propensity to say “it didn’t stop.” Of course, in that case, the propensity did not get manifested as when Jones, who also had the propensity, said “it didn’t stop.” Jones had the propensity too, only the propensity burst out into full flower. In Smith, we have the propensity that did not burst out into full flower. We can say, “Well, a very characteristic feature of people is that they don’t speak out loud all the time. That would be pretty hullabalooish. And so mothers and fathers bring up their children in such a way that they don’t do all of their thinking out loud, but they keep it on the tip of their tongue.”

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<sup>8</sup> Sellars says that he is giving us a different picture of the Meanings which does not involve grasping, labeling, names, or meaning classically construed.

This might lead us to modify subtly verbal behaviorism; we might claim that  $P_I$ , the propensity, is really the thought. Some propensities get actualized, others do not; and in both cases, there is thinking. If a person is really working through a line of thought, we should think of him as going through a series of propensities. Suppose, for example, this is what is on the tip of his tongue: "All men are mortal; Socrates is a man; so, Socrates is mortal." That is on the tip of his tongue; it is a certain line of thought, a pattern of propensities. Propensities are defined by what they are the propensities to do. To go through a process of thought is to go through a sequence of propensities to say things which are on the tip of one's tongue, so to speak.

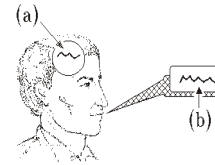
I am trying to give you a different picture of what knowledge is than the usual one in *figure 1..9* where there is a mind, a body, and a thought, (a), involving the grasping of a meaning of some kind, which then gets expressed by the saying. The usual view is that the thought is something which can be accompanied by an impulse, (b), to use labels which are appropriate to what you are thinking. If we have the thought, e.g., *that Harrisburg is the capital of Pennsylvania*, there would occur the impulse to utter the statement "Harrisburg is the capital of Pennsylvania." The impulse would be another thought (putting it crudely) *I shall say to him "Harrisburg is the capital of Pennsylvania."* There follows, according to the clever relationship existing between mind and body, the saying, (c), the use of the labels which pour out. Thus, one picture (run in slow motion) is that there is: first, the thought, the apprehending of the meaning *Harrisburg is the capital of Pennsylvania*, then the impulse *I will be a nice guy and tell him that Harrisburg is the capital of Pennsylvania*, and finally the saying, "Harrisburg is the capital of Pennsylvania." That is the standard kind of picture one encounters. I am trying to give you a different picture; it is a very crude picture, but not quite as crude as it was when we started out. I think we should get away from the idea that language is primarily an instrument, a series of labels which are instruments for getting other people to think thoughts.



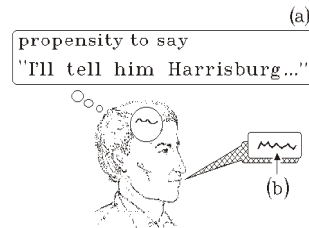
**Figure 1.6** (a) The *propensity* to say, not a hidden saying. (b) A time line indicating earlier and later times.

Language *can* be an instrument. There is such a thing as choosing one's words. But we can distinguish between thoughts of the first-order and thoughts of the second-order, i.e., thoughts about thoughts, and thoughts about thoughts about thoughts. Consider figure 1..10. Suppose we grant that there is a case in which Smith thinks, *Ah, Harrisburg is the capital of Pennsylvania. Hhmmm, I'll clue Jones in:* "Harrisburg is the capital of Pennsylvania." Obviously, that sort of thing can happen since you can choose your words. The verbal behaviorist can say that, that is because, on the tip of his tongue, he had not only the thought (the saying, if you will) "Harrisburg is the capital of Pennsylvania," but also a thought about it: viz., he had on the tip of his tongue "I shall use the words 'Harrisburg is the capital of Pennsylvania'." His choice to use those words is what really gave rise to the statement.

For the verbal behaviorist there are two ways in which "Harrisburg is the capital of Pennsylvania" can come about. One is simply spontaneous, in response to a question: he is playing the social game of saying, "Harrisburg is the capital of Pennsylvania." The response is the direct expression of the spontaneous propensity to say it. However, it might come about in a different way through a propensity which I will describe as follows: the propensity to say, "I'll tell him 'Harrisburg is the capital of Pennsylvania'." This is a thought about a saying which is, itself, a propensity to say something. This propensity generates, then, a non-spontaneous propensity to say something, since we normally do what we decide to do. According to the verbal behaviorist, to decide *I'll tell him that Harrisburg is the capital of Pennsylvania*, as in figure 1..11, is to have, on the tip of one's tongue the thought *I will say "Harrisburg is the capital of Pennsylvania"* which is naturally followed by the saying. Normally, if you



**Figure 1.8** A, the usual picture of thinking. (a) A thought. (b) An impulse to say. (c) An utterance (for the present, we can abstract away from our customary



**Figure 1.7** (a) A spontaneous propensity to say 'Harrisburg, Pennsylvania'. (b) The utterance of 'Harrisburg, Pennsylvania'.

decide to do something, you do it. If you think *I'm going to raise my arm*, normally you do not lift your foot; you raise your arm.

There are obviously situations in which you want to say that a person is using language to communicate; there is such a thing but that should not be taken to be the paradigm case. As I indicated, the verbal behaviorist can grant that there are such cases. But he is concerned with the nature of spontaneous thought and he is identifying thought, in this basic form, with spontaneous speech and the spontaneous propensity to say something. However, he can grant that often when we use language, we are not just spontaneously engaged in thinking out loud; often we are conniving, having thoughts about how we can deceive. An important thing about language is that it can be used to deceive. Consequently, we have to distinguish between what I call "the spontaneous natural flow of language" and those cases where we are literally deliberating and choosing our words. Many philosophers take their paradigm of the occurrence of language from the idea of using language in a deliberate, conniving sort of way. That is their sort of paradigm. My paradigm you can see from the choice of my original example: the bus is coming and Jones is saying "Why, it didn't stop!" Here is a case of spontaneous thinking out loud where it would be ridiculous even to suppose that the person had, in some sense, chosen to utter those words to communicate. Again, take the case where we are with a friend and not saying to ourselves "What can I get out of him? What can I get him to believe? What can I use him for? What's he after now? What has he done for me lately?" No! we are friends having a pleasant, candid conversation: "By the way, Tom, what is the capital of Pennsylvania?" Tom could be a deceiver, a liar, but, in this case, we are playing a candid conversation game. So he says, "Well, Bill, Harrisburg." No choice, no deliberation, no intention to use words as an instrument; just a spontaneous response by one language user to another language user. I want you to have those two examples in mind when you think about language and not the paradigm of using language as a set of labels to lead other people to think things, the usual model that people philosophize in terms of. It leads to very bad theories of knowledge.

Language can be an instrument just as anything can be an instrument, but do not think of language primarily as an instrument; think of language as a kind of joint way of living together which is

characteristic of the language using species. This is verbal behaviorism and it gives us a different picture with respect to language and thought. One of the virtues of this new picture is that it explains how we can know what other people think. Every time somebody is candidly talking, you are actually hearing them think. When you hear somebody think, that is not merely a matter of hearing the noises because thinking is not simply the uttering of noises. What more is it than the uttering of noises? It is not that it is the uttering of noises plus another item; it is that those noises belong to a larger pattern. Thus, a stage in the game of chess is not simply the pieces being in certain places, pieces of wood scattered in a certain interesting way; it is a stage in a game of chess *because* it was preceded by certain configurations and followed by certain configurations, because it is functioning in a certain way. Thus, when we hear somebody think, we are hearing a sound which is functioning in a certain way.<sup>9</sup>

At this moment, you are tempted to ask, “Well, can we *see* functions?” Let me give you an example. When we started out discussing objects of knowledge, at one stage we used an example of a book: perhaps even this book you are presently reading. Do we see the book? Of course we see the book. We spent a lot of time seeing that book. We even see the book *as* a book. But then we started getting petty. What do we see *of* the book? Do we see its back side? No. Do we see its insides? No. Do we see a billionth of an inch inside? No. Recall, that is the dialectic which enabled us to distinguish between what we see and what we *really* see of the book. It is familiar by now. But still, the fact remains that it is perfectly legitimate to say, “We can see the book and we can see that something is a book.” When you see this *as* a book, you are seeing it *as* an object that functions in a certain way. Obviously. When you see something *as* a newspaper, you are seeing something that functions in a certain way. Thus, when I say that you can hear somebody think (e.g., Jones who says, “Why it didn’t stop!”), that is not simply your hear-

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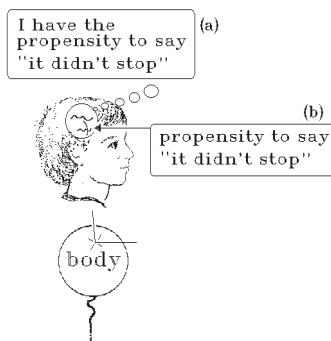
<sup>9</sup> Editor’s note: A discussion of the relationship between verbal behaviorism and private episodes appears in section xv of “Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind,” *SPR*, 186. Verbal behaviorism, as part of the Jonesian Myth (aside from providing a method for dealing with the problem of other minds—to which Sellars alludes) is a cornerstone in Sellars’ argument that inner episodes are best construed in terms of the categories appropriate to overt speech, that is that they be construed as propensities to say. As we have seen, such an argument underwrites the application of the logic of ‘means’ to inner episodes and, hence, to the metaphysics of epistemology.

ing the noises that he utters. It is hearing those noises *as* functioning language, just as seeing a book *as* a book is seeing an object as functioning in a certain way and capable of functioning in certain ways.

Many philosophers have been worried about the problem of other minds, and we will worry about it. But at least, at the first level, before we get tangled up, we can say that there is a straightforward commonsense way in which we hear people think. Naturally, once I tell you about verbal behaviorism, it sounds pretty good, doesn't it? We hear people think. Surely, it's obvious, isn't it? We can even hear ourselves think: "Gee, it's so loud in here I can't hear myself think." But clearly, there is a metaphor around here that we want to examine very carefully. Consider, again, the situation in which Jones says, "Why it didn't stop!" He is a very overt, casual and forthcoming sort of person.

Suppose now that he has a bit of a Smith in him and that there are a lot of people around him. Suddenly, he says, "Why it didn't stop!" Then he looks around, *My God, I just thought out loud, "it didn't stop."* *I better watch myself; they'll be putting me in a booby-hatch if I don't start keeping my thoughts to myself.* So, we can hear other people think and we can hear ourselves think. We are obviously on the point of raising all kinds of questions involved in philosophy of mind, but I will not dive into those. However, I do want you to bear in mind that the verbal behaviorist says that, in the sense in which we can see a book *as* a book, we can hear a thinking out loud *as* a thinking out loud. Each involves an experience of something as functioning in a certain way.

I have to raise one more question before I leave this topic of verbal behaviorism which I will put to use later on. In *figure 1..12* we find a younger Smith; let us say that he has a spontaneous propensity to say, but does not actually say, "It didn't stop!" Can Smith know that he thought it, that is, that he had that propensity? You see, if he actually said "It didn't stop!" then he would have heard himself think. But suppose he does not say it out loud. How would



**Figure 1.9** (a) A thought as a propensity about saying. (b) A non-spontaneous propensity to say that Harris-

he know when he thinks? People obviously know when they think, don't they? Sometimes you actually hear people say, "Well, gee! I don't know what I think until I say it," and they are pretty smart, at least according to the verbal behaviorist. However, that is not quite so. We can know what we think even though we do not say anything. But that requires only that we can respond and that, in the process of learning a language and becoming acculturated, we can have other propensities which are responses to propensities.



Figure 1.11

Let me illustrate this. Suppose (as many people would think) that to feel anger involves not only having bodily sensations of a certain kind along with tension and the like, but also a propensity to strike out, as it were. Let us take a very naive, simple case of anger; anger is spread over all kinds of things. Suppose, for example, there is a boy about 7 years old. He is just getting into the stream of things. Somebody, a little bigger, jostles him and, now, he is angry. That anger involves a propensity, in his case, to strike out. But then, in time, he has been brought along and acculturated; he has learned to respond to his anger with the thought *I am angry*. How does he get this? Well, in *figure 1.13*, at age 2, he is filled with anger, but he does not even have the concept of anger yet. He is not in the anger-language game, but his mother says, "Tommy, you are angry." A little later on something happens, he turns pale, clenches his fists and his mother says, "Tommy, you're angry." Naturally, when we repeat that in different contexts a few times and, given the way you and I are participants in the language game, he begins acquiring the ability to respond to his anger (even when his mother is not there) by "I am angry." You can hear him mutter "I am angry. I mustn't be; I mustn't behave in an angry way." People can learn to respond to their propensities with autobiographical language such as "I am angry." Here, in *figure 1.14*, is the propensity to say "I am angry."

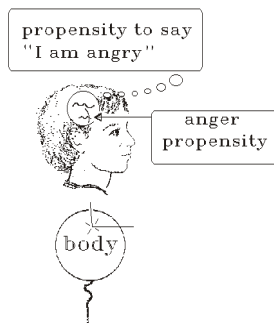


Figure 1.10

Here, in *figure 1.14*, is the propensity to say "I am angry." The child acquired the ability to realize that he is angry: that is, the propensity to say, "Aha!

I'm angry." People can acquire the ability to respond to their propensities with other propensities.

One boy says, "Hhmmm, I'm angry" and he is responding to his anger with the autobiographical statement "I am angry" which involves the propensities to say it, of course.<sup>10</sup> Tommy Smith responds to the anger with the propensity to say "I am angry" but he does not say "I am angry" because his mother taught him to keep his thoughts to himself. What I am suggesting, then, is that the verbal behaviorist can give a perfectly straightforward account of self-knowledge: namely, that Tommy has learned to respond to his anger with an autobiographical description of himself. And, furthermore, this response, as we will see, is a *reliable* one. Indeed, there is a correlation between the response and the anger such that the response is likely to be true. This "evokes themes" we discussed earlier in connection with pain. Here would be a case where, even though he does not say "I am angry," nevertheless, he is thinking that I am angry. One can respond to anger by the propensity to say "I am angry;" one can respond to a propensity to say "it didn't stop" by "I have the propensity to say 'it didn't stop'." We could, according to the verbal behaviorist, respond in this more complicated way (this is a very pedantic way of putting it). We will explore later on why we do not put it in that way, but at present we have a case of responding to a propensity to say "it didn't stop" with another propensity, a propensity to say "I have the propensity to say 'it didn't stop'." The latter would be the higher level counterpart of what we had in figure 1.14 with the autobiographical statement "I am angry" and the anger because, instead of just having the propensity to say this, one might actually say, "Aha! I have the propensity to say 'it didn't stop.'" This will be valuable when we come to pull things together in the theory of knowledge.

Notice that I said that here we would have a reliable propensity. Putting it crudely, when Tommy says "I am angry" candidly and spontaneously in response to his anger, well then, he is likely to be angry. Just as I said that when a person has a spontaneous tendency to say "I am in pain," it is likely that he is in pain. It may be that we have to understand the "knowledge" aspect of *I am angry* in terms of the reliability of this correlation. Certain statements which we

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<sup>10</sup>Editor's note: Sellars begins to explore the Jonesian (verbal behaviorist) counterpart of the direct awareness of inner states.

spontaneously make tend to be true. This, I think, will turn out to be a very important feature of language: in candid speech certain statements we make have a high likelihood of being true. And someone that has a thought with a high likelihood of being true is close by and near to knowledge.

I have been trying to give you different ways of looking at the classical issues pertaining to meanings, thinking and language. Now, I want you to let that stew for a while; you will feel its attractiveness as we start working in a more orthodox tradition with Roderick Chisholm.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Editor's note: In the next lecture, Sellars will explore Kant and Reid's tactic of showing that sense impressions are not thoughts but, roughly, serve to trigger our natural belief that there is, for example, a red triangle here and now—a point Descartes made. He must show, then, why we should suppose that these instinctive beliefs are correct: what is the source of their authority? Although our primary interest is in the world we are in and not ourselves, Sellars asks the more pressing question: Isn't what we *really* know what goes on in our minds and, therefore, don't we have to justify other beliefs in terms of beliefs about our own mental activities? His solution involves showing that categories pertaining to concepts depend on linguistic kinds. We have seen that believings *intend meanings*. Subsequently, *intends* will turn out to be a function of meaning. In classical terminology, a belief can intend, mentally, an object which does not obtain. *Intending* is "mentally meaning," meaning belonging to the domain of conceivables (i.e., the intersubjective domain of meanings). We call them 'meanings' in contexts dealing with examples such as 'Jones R meaning' (where 'R' is a relation) but we call them 'conceivables' in contexts dealing with 'Belief R meaning.' Consequently, the exploration of objects of knowledge focuses on the context "'—' in L means \_\_\_\_.'" The analysis of 'means,' 'stands for,' etc. underwrites an analysis of believing and, hence, knowing. Sellars will show that to say what an act of thought intends is to say what its function is.