

Commentary on Hattiangadi

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Anandi Hattiangadi (2015). “The Limits of Expressivism”. In Gross, Tebben, and Williams, *Meaning without Representation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Anandi Hattiangadi (2007). *Thoughts and Oughts: Rule-following and the normativity of content* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

In my book *Meaning and Normativity* (2012), I addressed meaning. More precisely, I developed a *metatheory* of meaning, a theory of what the term ‘means’ means. Central to my approach is a sharp distinction between concepts and properties. The property of being water, as my prime example has it, turns out to be the property of being H₂O, even though the two concepts are distinct. Likewise with meaning, I propose: meaning properties are different from meaning concepts. Meaning *properties* are natural properties, but *concepts* of meaning are non-naturalistic. The property of meaning DOG by the word ‘dog’ is a natural property—rooted, presumably, in the linguistic proclivities of speakers of English.¹ This property is psychological or sociological. The job of a metatheory of meaning is not to identify what this property is; that is the job of a substantive theory of meaning. Rather, the job of a metatheory of meaning is to say what would be at issue between theorists who disagreed on what this property is—on what, say, meaning DOG by a word consists in. It is to say what the concept MEANING is that the disputants have in common so that they are not talking past each other.

The metatheory of meaning I experiment with in the book combines two chief features: the claim that concepts of meaning are normative, and expressivism as an account of the meaning of normative concepts. Among other things, this metatheory says something about its own meaning. It applies expressivism to itself. Anandi Hattiangadi, in her critical essay of 2015 on my book, argues that this cannot work.² One can’t successfully combine the view that meaning claims are normative claims with expressivism as an account of what normative claims mean. Her arguments suggest, she says, that “the globalization of expressivism reaches its limit when it comes to intentionality”^{240d}. I think this isn’t right, and in this reply I’ll explain why I think it isn’t.

¹ As in my book and Hattiangadi’s article, I use small caps to denote concepts.

² Anandi Hattiangadi, “The Limits of Expressivism”. In Gross, Tebben, and Williams, *Meaning without Representation* (2015)

Hattiangadi is the author of a major 2007 book *Thoughts and Oughts* on the same topic as mine. I am puzzled why, in *Meaning and Normativity*, I didn't acknowledge this book of hers, even to the point of acknowledging not discussing it. (I did acknowledge not heeding a joint article of hers on the topic,³ and I have some memory of, at one point, acquiring her book and looking at it, with its wonderful cover photograph—but perhaps it was by then too late for me to take note of her book in mine.) I expect that if I had heeded it in time, I would have needed to say about it what I said about Lance and O'Leary Hawthorne's 1997 book *The Grammar of Meaning*. As background, let me note that my 2012 book *Meaning and Normativity* starts out with material from my 1994 article of the same name. About Lance and O'Leary Hawthorne's book, I said in the preface to my book that I share leading ideas of theirs, including that meaning claims concern "what ought to be inferred from what". But, I also said, they develop these ideas "in a way quite different from mine, and I have not attempted an assessment of their approach or tried to compare it with my own ways of doing things"^{ix}. With both books, my lack of engagement was mutual: neither Lance and O'Leary-Hawthorne nor Hattiangadi mentioned my 1994 article or engaged ideas that were special to it.⁴ Now that Hattiangadi has engaged my thinking on these subjects, I am glad to try to make amends and say things both about her critique and about her book. I would have thought that my 1994 article took care of the kind of line that she develops in her book, and I should explain why that is. I'll begin, though, with her critical article and then say something on how our views in our two books engage and fail to.

An expressivistic account of meaning claims as normative

Hattiangadi, as I say, thinks that the arguments she gives suggest that one can't successfully combine two aspects of my book: (1) the view that meaning claims are normative claims, and (2) expressivism as an account of the nature of normative claims. How does she arrive at this? In the first place, I think, she arrives at it by a misinterpretation. She takes me to be denying that some straight explanation of intentionality can be given. She writes, "An expressivist explanation of intentionality, modeled on the expressivist's explanation of morality, either entails that some straight explanation of intentionality can be given, or ultimately it is spurious"^{240e}. As I have indicated and as I'll explain further, I don't deny that some straight explanation of intentionality can be given. Rather, I affirm that one *can* be given. What my expressivism does is say what such an explanation would mean. Talk of intentionality is not purely naturalistic, on the view I experiment with and develop; the question of what the goings-on are, as designated naturalistically, that make for intentionality is, I propose, a normative question. Expressivism

³ Krister Bykvist and Hattiangadi (2007). "Does Thought Imply Ought?" (2007).

⁴ Bykvist and Hattiangadi do paid heed to my paper "Thoughts and Norms" (2003).

explains the meanings of claims as to what meaning consists in, but whatever it is that meaning consists in, I maintain, some straight explanation of it will be correct.

This complex feature of my views is what depends most crucially on distinguishing concepts from properties. As I keep saying, meaning properties are natural, whereas concepts of meaning are non-naturalistic. Meaning properties are natural and can be given straight explanations. An example could take the form, “Meaning DOG consists in...,” where the dots are filled in by a straight naturalistic description of the property of meaning DOG (a property shared by the English word ‘dog’ and the French word ‘chien’). This claim as to what meaning DOG consists in is normative, according to my metatheory, since the term ‘meaning DOG’ is normative. It is a substantive claim about a meaning property, the property of meaning DOG. This claim itself, according to my metatheory, is normative. It says something about how one ought to use the phrase ‘means DOG’.

Hattiangadi considers my treatment of Kripke on Wittgenstein and my example of a dispute between characters Jerry and Tyler, Jerry a meaning solipsist and Tyler a meaning communitarian. As she recognizes, I say that Jerry and Tyler are engaged in a substantive dispute about which of various sentences to accept. But, she objects, Jerry and Tyler are offering straight solutions to the problem of intentionality, and hence offering them not as compatible with expressivism but as competitors to it^{27e}. This gets matters wrong, I say; they aren’t competitors, but rather, are doing different jobs in a compatible way. The disagreement of Jerry and Tyler, as she correctly says, is on what determines semantic facts. That’s a dispute in the substantive theory of meaning. Expressivism, though, I repeat, figures in a meta-theory of meaning, a theory of what the term ‘meaning’ means, of what’s in dispute between theorists like Jerry and Tyler. It is not a competitor to any substantive theory of meaning; rather, it offers an interpretation of what substantive theories of meaning are saying.

Like Hattiangadi’s book, my own book begins by considering arguments of Kripke’s in his book *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*. (That part of my book is drawn from my 1994 article, whose claims still seem to me to be correct.⁵) I claim that the key to resolving the paradox that Kripke finds in Wittgenstein is distinguishing the concept of meaning from the property of meaning. Hattiangadi, though, writes in her critical article, “An expressivist oblique explanation of intentionality cannot require that a straight naturalistic explanation of intentionality can be given, for this would conflict with the contention that semantic concepts are

⁵ Boghossian and I have a related exchange that is somewhat widely discussed. Jason Bridges rejects the interpretation I draw from the famous passage in Kripke that I quote; I agree that one line of what Kripke says doesn’t fit the thesis I draw from the passage, but the rest of the passage does seem to suggest it. At any rate, whether the thesis is worth exploring doesn’t much depend on what Kripke meant. See Bridges, “Rule-Following Skepticism”, in Conant and Kern (eds.), *Varieties of Skepticism*, DeGruyter, 2014.

normative, and hence that no straight naturalistic account of them can be given”^{233g}. Here again, it would be important to distinguish properties from concepts. What I deny in the book concerns specifically analysis of meanings: I deny that one can give a purely naturalistic *meaning analysis* of semantic concepts, an account according to which something purely naturalistic is the very meaning of a term like ‘means’. Hattiangadi seems to take me to deny further things which I am far from denying, things I affirm.

She writes, “If Kripke only succeeds in proving that the concept of meaning cannot be analyzed naturalistically, as Gibbard suggests, he only succeeds in ruling out straight a priori naturalism, and straight a posteriori naturalism remains viable”^{228a}. I agree with this last and more. Distinguish three possible positions: (a) analytical naturalism, (b) a priori, non-analytic naturalism, and (c) a posteriori naturalism. Of these I reject only (a), analytic naturalism. As for (b), a priori, non-analytic naturalism, I hold, like Kant, that many a priori claims are not analytic; rather, they are synthetic a priori. Fundamental ethical truths are a prime example, along with fundamental normative truths more generally. It is controversial which claims have this status and which do not, but suppose, for instance, ethical hedonists are right; then the claim “What’s good is what’s pleasurable” is a case in point. If ethical hedonists are right in this claim, the claim is a priori—and necessary—but arguments of G.E. Moore and others show that it is not analytic. The same will hold, I say, for the concept MEANS: the true answer to the question of what, say, meaning DOG consists in may be a priori, even though it will be controversial and non-analytic. Theorists of meaning can coherently disagree on what meaning DOG consists in, and in my fiction of Jerry and Tyler (in my book and my 1994 article), I sketched two competing substantive theories of meaning that address questions of this sort. Whether or not either of these theories is correct, neither of them will follow analytically from the very meaning of ‘means’. Position (c) too, a posteriori naturalism, will be right, I hold, for some sorts of questions of meaning. What the word ‘chien’ means in Frenchman Pierre’s mouth is an a posteriori matter that depends heavily on Pierre’s linguistic proclivities—and according to some theorists, also on the linguistic proclivities of his community of French-speakers. The shape of this dependence, though, is not settled analytically by the sheer meaning of ‘means’. Rather, it is a matter on which theorists of meaning can disagree, and yet still all be coherent and still all mean MEANS by the word ‘means’.

Hattiangadi, in her critical article, soon acknowledges something like this. “Perhaps, as Gibbard sometimes suggests, the claims he makes about what grasp of concepts consists in should be construed as part of the substantive theory, not a straight naturalistic explanation. It would thus be “on a par with Jerry and Tyler’s accounts of what meaning consists in”^{233h}. Exactly! Hattiangadi argues, though, that there is reason to reject such a position. “The expressivist’s meta-theory should be neutral with respect to substantive questions”²³³ⁱ. We need “an explanation of what it takes to grasp semantic concepts that vindicates the claim that

semantic concepts are normative. And this violates the demand for the meta-theory to be substantively neutral”^{234c}. This, however, I contend, misconstrues the kind of substantive neutrality that a metatheory of meaning needs to have. An explanation of what it takes to grasp semantic concepts is part not of a metatheory of meaning but of a substantive theory. The metatheory will say what such an explanation means—and it is this last that should be neutral on which such explanation is correct.

My metatheory of meaning is rather complex, but to explore questions of neutrality, let me again put the metatheory as a simple slogan: “To say what a word means is to say how to use it.” This of course isn’t neutral on what ‘means’ means, since what it says about meaning is meant to be a conceptual truth. In what sense, then, should a metatheory of meaning be neutral, if not about its own truth? The idea is to have a common subject matter for people who disagree in their substantive theories of meaning, so that their disagreement will be genuine and not merely verbal. A substantive theory of meaning will purport to tell us things such as what it is for a word to mean DOG.⁶ It will offer an answer to this in naturalistic terms. Theorists may disagree on what the features are that make a word mean what it does, and how those features accomplish this. A metatheory—a theory of what ‘means’ means—shouldn’t tell us the answer to questions like these. If it does, it isn’t neutral in the way it needs to be, and the substantive answers it gives will be analytic and so uninformative. My goal has been to identify what might be at issue among theorists who disagree on substantive questions of what meaning such-and-such consists in, of what features of a person’s usage and surroundings determine what a word means in a the person’s mouth.

Of course, as I have noted that Hattiangadi notes, if this metatheory is correct, it applies to itself. It says what is meant by saying that a term of yours means MEANS—and on this question the metatheory can’t be neutral. But it is neutral on what the features of a person’s usage are in virtue of which a term in that person’s mouth means MEANS. When you the reader apply the metatheory to yourself and consider whether to believe it, you believe it coherently only if you satisfy a requirement of coherence: that settling what a term of yours means settles how to use it. It settles, roughly, which of your sentences couched with that term to accept. (I am still speaking loosely here; what the meaning settles is the analytic aspects of usage; the meaning of ‘hot’ doesn’t by itself settle whether to accept your sentence ‘Tomorrow will be a hot day.’ I spend considerable effort in *Meaning and Normativity* trying to establish what aspects of usage are analytic.)

⁶ I am tempted to say that it will purport to tell us in general what meaning such-and-such consists in, but I want to allow for a substantive view like Paul Horwich’s according to which though specific meanings have a nature, there’s no general account to be given of what meaning *x* consists in.

Hattiangadi adduces some other arguments, but I am having some trouble appreciating their force. What, she asks, of people who have a competing metatheory—especially those who offer naturalistic analyses of what MEANS means^{237hd}? I don't understand how this amounts to a challenge. If the mere fact that someone might disagree were a worry for me, it would be a worry for anyone with any view whatsoever, metaethical or otherwise, expressivistic or naturalistic, since someone might disagree. We need to discern more precisely, then, what the worry might be. Hattiangadi asks us to consider Kathrin, “an anti-normativist about meaning who uses ‘means’ to express the non-normative concept MEANS*, and displays none of the dispositions that Gibbard takes to be constitutive of grasping the normative concept MEANS”^{237h}. Then an argument with semantic terms “construed expressivistically has no explanatory value for Kathrin whatsoever”^{237h}. “Expressivism applied to Kathrin’s language is false,” and my own plans for what sentences of mine to accept will not “explain why no straight or naturalistic explanation of intentionality is needed”²³⁷ⁱ. What follows? If this fictional Kathrin is stipulated not to have the dispositions that I claim constitute meaning MEANS by the word ‘means’, then my metatheory doesn’t claim to apply to the word in her mouth. I don’t claim that necessarily, no matter what they are like, everyone means by the sound ‘means’ what I say we do. I do, to be sure, have to convince readers that they and I mean by the word ‘means’ what I say we do—and that will be no light job. I propose toward the end of the book some tests a reader can run on himself to test whether she means by ‘means’ what I say we do. Try them, please, and tell me what you find.⁷

If we do mean by our talk of intentionality what I say we mean, does it follow that our plans for what sentences of ours to accept will “explain why no straight or naturalistic explanation of intentionality is needed”? Hattiangadi seems to think that it does follow. As I say, though, I hold that a naturalistic explanation of intentionality *is* needed. I hold too that which such explanation is correct is a normative question on which substantive theories of meaning can disagree. What I claim for my metatheory of meaning is that it tells us what the disagreement is about. In rough terms, the disagreement concerns how to use words, in light of messy and complex patterns of how we are in fact disposed to use them. No one thinks that we always use our words correctly, and substantive theories of meaning, according to my metatheory, claim to tell us what correctness in using our words consists in.

Now of course if the fictional Kathrin (or even a real Kathrin) doesn’t have the concepts in which my explanations are couched, then she won’t follow my explanations. Moreover, even if she has those concepts, if she doesn’t believe the things I say in offering my explanations, she won’t believe that they explain what I am trying to explain. Again, however, these things apply to any explanation whatsoever that anyone might offer of anything. When I address Kathrin—be

⁷ *Meaning and Normativity* (2012), Chap. 9, “Interpreting Interpretation”, 193 ff.

it Kathrin Glüer or some other theorist—one thing I am trying to do is to convince her that the explanations I offer are true of the word ‘means’ in her English. If they aren’t, then I’m not addressing questions that she poses with the word ‘means’. Even if that’s so, I might still hope, though, to convince her that questions of what words mean in the sense that I try to elucidate are worth understanding. This is a normal situation for a theorist propounding theses that don’t already have universal assent, whether or not the theorist is right and whether or not readers are convinced.

Plan-laden explanations of happenings

The real crux of Hattiangadi’s complaint may not be any of these things—not any of the things that I have just been arguing don’t make sense as objections. Rather, the crux seems to be that she finds a special problem with terms that are plan-laden, as I think the term ‘meaning’ to be. Can such terms figure in good explanations of natural phenomena, such as linguistic phenomena and phenomena of thinking? Meanings figure in explanations of things that people say and do; could plan-laden terms accomplish this? Can it be that what it’s correct to say, and when, figures in explaining what a speaker does say, or how a hearer responds? “It is difficult to see how these expressions of plans can have the right kind of explanatory force,” Hattiangadi writes^{236h}.

Some time ago, there was a debate in the metaethics literature about what were called “moral explanations”: if emotivism were true, could one explain, say, the downfall of a regime by its badness? Such a “moral explanation” is one kind of normative explanation of a thing’s happening. I treated such normative explanations in my 2003 book *Thinking How to Live*, but alas in *Meaning and Normativity*, I neglected to reiterate what I had said. That left a big hole in my elucidation of my metatheory of meaning. Although Hattiangadi did seek out *Thinking How to Live* on some topics, she understandably didn’t address my treatment there of normative explanations of happenings designated non-normatively. It was a fault in *Meaning and Normativity* not to reiterate my earlier treatment of normative explanations, leaving the reader to have to go from book to book to get the whole theory of the concept MEANS that I was advocating. Hattiangadi does heed my earlier book on some matters (228–230), but she doesn’t bring in my earlier treatment of normative explanations. I should reiterate it and explore how it speaks to her critique.

Here again, then, is my account of such explanations. (Simon Blackburn discusses this issue too, and has roughly the same treatment as I advocate.⁸) There are a number of specific views that one might have according to which the badness of a regime caused its downfall. One might believe that cruelty is what’s bad, and that cruelty caused the downfall. Alternatively, one might believe that laxity is what’s bad, and that laxity caused the downfall. Each such pair conjoins

⁸ See Blackburn, “Just Causes” (1991).

something purely moral with something purely naturalistic. (If ‘cruel’ and ‘lax’ are too normatively “thick” to count as purely naturalistic, take more specific, clearly naturalistic characterizations of a regime.) An emotivist could render the first as “Cruelty caused the downfall, and Boo for cruelty!” To believe that the regime’s badness caused its downfall is in effect to believe the disjunction of all such moral-naturalistic pairs. “Cruelty is what’s bad and the cruelty of the regime caused its downfall, **or** laxity is what’s bad and the laxity of the regime causes its downfall, **or**” We could shorten this to “Something is what badness in a regime consists in and that was that that caused the regime’s downfall.” So normative findings—like that the regime was bad—can explain naturalistically couched happenings and phenomena, such as that the regime met its downfall.

Hattiangadi has a more general objection to such expressively couched explanations of happenings and states of affairs. If, she says, an ascription of meaning “expresses a plan for sentence acceptance, it does not tell us anything about the English language; it only tells us what sentences Gibbard plans to accept”^{238c}. What she says here, though, doesn’t hold for this or for any other assertion, even the most straightforwardly naturalistic. If I assert “The moon orbits the earth,” this tells us something about the moon, namely that it orbits the earth, not about my belief state, that I believe that the moon orbits the earth. The fact that I made the assertion I did probably will evidence something about my state of mind, but that’s not what my assertion tells us. It tells us about the moon, not about me. In general, we can say, as with any other kind of assertion, what an expression of a planning state tells us is whatever it is that we would come to believe if we believed the assertion. How does this truism apply when what I express is not a naturalistic belief but my acceptance of a plan? Again, what an assertion tells you is what you would come to believe if you believed what I said. That’s what it tells you, whether it tells you that truly or falsely, and whether or not you believe what it tells you. Now, according to my metatheory, the metatheory of mine that Hattiangadi thinks has such untoward consequences, to believe an ought statement is to have certain plans. It is to share the plan that the ought statement voices. Thus suppose I tell you, “Gerhardt’s word ‘etwas’ means SOMETHING.” This tells us how to use the word ‘etwas’ if one is Gerhardt. In saying this, I express acceptance of a plan to use the word ‘etwas’ in certain ways if one is Gerhardt—among other things, to apply existential generalization to it. You believe what I say if and only if you accept these plans for how to use the word ‘etwas’ if one is Gerhardt. Strictly, what my assertion tells you is not *how I plan* to use the word ‘etwas’ for the case of being Gerhardt, but how *to* use it in that case. It tells you something about Gerhardt’s German—something normative, namely how to use this term in Gerhardt’s German.

Suppose, then, we want to explain a person’s deriving “Something is white” from “Snow is white.” In rough terms, the explanation can go like this: In simple enough matters, the person tends to derive as she ought. In that the word ‘Something’ means what it does in her mouth, she

ought to apply existential generalization to it, and thus from ‘Snow is white’ derive ‘Something is white.’ That’s simple enough, and so accordingly, she will tend to do so. That explains her doing so. All this simplifies in various ways, but in rough terms, it offers a correct explanation. The explainers here are normative—not purely but in part. In brief, a word’s meaning something in a person’s mouth consists in her having a tendency, among other things, to apply Existential Generalization to the word, and this tendency explains her deriving as she did.

The central claim of semantic expressivism I summarized with the slogan, “To say what a word means is to say how to use it”—to say which of one’s sentences with the term to accept. To say that a word in a speaker’s mouth voices the concept SOMETHING is, among other things, to say to treat it, for the case of being that speaker, as I ought to treat my word ‘something’. To assert this semantic claim is to express a state of planning, of planning how to apply the word in case one is that speaker. Why plan such a thing? The plan will have some basis. Presumably—and here I speak substantively rather than meta-theoretically—the basis will be something about proclivities the speaker shares with me, such as proclivities, in simple cases, to apply existential generalization to the word ‘something’. (Proclivities of the speaker’s community may come into this basis too.) If the hearer requires a similar basis for planning to apply existential generalization to the word, then the hearer who believes the speaker will also believe that the subject for the most part applies existential generalization to the word. And this explains his deriving as he does.

Isn’t this unduly complex? Why go around Robin Hood’s barn and put this in normative terms, when we could rely, in our explanation, on the straight behavioral observation that the subject, in simple cases, tends to apply existential generalization to her word ‘something’? If we do this latter, we stick to behavioral tendencies, specified in non-normative terms. But couldn’t one believe that the speaker’s word’s meaning SOMETHING helps explain why she applied existential generalization, without being decided what meaning SOMETHING consists in? One might, for instance, accept that Gerhardt’s German word ‘etwas’ means SOMETHING on the authority of one’s German teacher, without having a worked out view of what dispositions meaning SOMETHING consists in. Thinking this consists, among other things, in planning how to use the word ‘etwas’ if one is a German. Even with a familiar word I share with the subject, such as the word ‘something’, we tend to predict behavioral tendencies in a situation by hypothetically thinking what to do in their situation. That makes prediction easier. And in the case of linguistic oughts, mostly, in simple enough situations, what people ought, in light of their linguistic proclivities, to do is what they do in fact tend to do. We may not fully agree on dicey matters of what a person’s linguistic proclivities must be like for it to be the case that he means SOMETHING by his word ‘etwas’, but if we agree that he meant SOMETHING by ‘etwas’, that may bring us close enough to agreement on the subject’s proclivities for you to accept the normative explanation I offer, accept it on my authority. Theorists won’t agree on just what the subject’s

linguistic proclivities have to be like for him to mean SOMETHING by a word, but they can count on enough agreement to agree on a semantic explanation of the subject's doing what he did. They agree in plan.

Once I believe that Gerhardt's word 'etwas' means SOMETHING, then, I predict and explain Gerhardt's usage by thinking how to use my word 'something' if I'm Gerhardt. I predict and explain Gerhardt's use of his word 'etwas', then, by thinking what to do with my word 'something', planning to do the same thing with 'etwas' for the case of being Gerhardt, and the expecting Gerhardt to do that.

So agreed, as Hattiangadi seems to be saying, the fact that I voice the plan I do doesn't by itself tell you anything about the English language. Still, we may be confident that we share enough by way of judgments of how to use words, and why, that when I voice my plans, you can come to share them, and so accept the normative explanation I offer you. Analogously, if I voice disapproval of Hitler by saying "Hitler was evil", the fact that I voice disapproval doesn't by itself tell you anything about Hitler and what he was like. Still, we may be confident that we share enough by way of basic attitudes that when I voice non-basic attitudes such as disapproval of Hitler, you can come to share them, and so accept the normative explanation I offer you of things Hitler did. Likewise, if I tell you, 'Treat Gerhardt's word 'etwas' like our word 'something', that doesn't all by itself tell you how the Gerhardt's language works. But in light of things I take it we share, saying this might be the best way to do the job of explaining his German. That, in rough terms, is how I am saying normative assertions about meaning can tell us about a language—as with, if I am right' the assertion "Gerhardt's word 'etwas' means SOMETHING.

"It does not follow from the expression of a plan for all speakers of English that all English speakers share one's plan"^{238f}. That's right: I can think that people plan to use certain of their words incorrectly, as when they plan to say "Between you and I" or plan to deny the claim "Squares are rectangles". But judgments about the meanings of English speakers' words, I am proposing, consist in plans on the part of the person making the judgments. My plan to include squares as "rectangles" is a plan for all English-speakers, even though not all English-speakers share this plan. I believe that squares are in the extension of the word 'rectangle' even in the case of English-speakers who deny this. My grounds for this is that it avoids an unsystematic exception to saying that 'rectangle' in English means quadrilateral with four right angles.

A misleading choice of words on my part

I turn now to a way I misled readers by a bad choice of words. I say in the book that, in a sense, I am preaching to the choir. My explanation of my talk of the "choir" was this: "A normatively couched expressivism depends for its intelligibility on a prior grasp of the concept it explains.

Its proponent explains the concept to a choir already practiced in the concept.”⁹ That isn’t, though, what “preaching to the choir” normally means, and I shouldn’t have used this phrase. Normally, the phrase means addressing readers whom one takes to believe already, fervently, what one is saying. That is of course not what I do in the book. I try, rather, to work out a theory that may be correct and that I hope can be illuminating. I work to explain the theory, and try, in case it is correct, to offer readers who do not already believe the theory reasons to believe it. I also hope that any readers who may already somewhat believe a theory like this get clearer on what the theory is and, in case it is right, get themselves clearer on grounds for believing it. I hope too that readers who find something wrong with the theory or how I present it will establish its defects, whether they call for abandoning the theory or refining it. These are the standard aims of philosophical writing, and they are not the sorts of things ordinarily meant by “preaching to the choir”. Readers would have every right to feel misled by my choice of words.

What I meant by this misleading phrase is what I stated that I meant: that my metatheory of meaning “depends for its intelligibility on a prior grasp of the concept it explains,” namely the concept MEANS. That will have to be a feature of any metatheory of meaning, of any account of what the term ‘means’ means, whether it is couched normatively or naturalistically. To understand and believe any claim as to what the word ‘means’ means, one must already understand the word and thus grasp the concept it voices. It doesn’t follow, though, that one must believe a correct account of the concept, or any account at all. Young children function quite well in discussing what words mean—though they may be told incorrect things, like that ‘happiness’ means a warm puppy.

Back now to Hattiangadi, whom I misled with my bad choice of words. Perhaps, she proposes, I would say that my “expressivism about meaning depends for its intelligibility on a prior grasp of the concept MEANS. If the choir grasp Gibbard’s normative concept MEANS, then they share Gibbard’s plans, and if they share Gibbard’s plans, then his expression of those plans will explain to the choir” various things that she mentions^{239c}. The first part of this reads me correctly: my expressivism about meaning does depend “for its intelligibility on a prior grasp of the concept MEANS.” I claim to explain what a term means, and so of course the intelligibility of my explanation must depend on a prior grasp of the concept MEANS. It doesn’t follow, though, that if readers grasp the concept MEANS that I am trying to explain, they share any of my plans—or in particular, that they share my plans for how to use the word ‘means’ for the case of being one of them with their linguistic proclivities. Sharing these plans, on my view, would constitute not grasping the concept, but believing my theory of the concept. One can grasp a concept without having a correct theory of it: Children who talk about what words mean often grasp the

⁹ *M&N*, p. 229, with a typo corrected, quoted by Harriangadi, p. 239b.

concept pretty well, but aren't likely to understand my theory of it, much less to believe the theory.

Expressive arguments need not be spurious

Hattiangadi speaks of “a little argument” as one I might intend, and responds, “The trouble is that this little argument must itself be construed expressivistically, and in being so construed, is rendered spurious”^{239d}. I'm not clear whether her claim is that any argument has to be spurious as construed expressivistically, or whether it is a specific argument that is rendered spurious. It won't matter for my purposes here what this “little argument” is; the point I need to make is this: an argument construed expressivistically need not be spurious.

The things that apply to all arguments will apply here: Like any argument, such an argument will have premises and a conclusion. Accepting the premises require accepting the conclusion, in that one must not accept the premises and reject the conclusion. (The “must” here is normative, and the norms in question say not what to do by way of willed action, but what to accept and what to reject—something we don't do at will.) As for whether and why to accept the premises, answers to this will be various, and at some point reasons come to an end. “All else equal, prefer enjoyment to suffering!” is, I hope you will agree, an injunction to accept. It can then be a premise of an argument: Add to it the premise, “Hitting your thumb with a hammer will result in suffering in place of enjoyment”, and you can derive, “All else equal, don't hit your thumb with a hammer!”

What does this have to do with arguments concerning meaning, construed expressivistically? Interpreting natural events, such as voicing the word ‘something’, as having meaning, on the metatheory I explore in the book, requires interpretive maxims, which are normative. A candidate interpretive maxim might be something like this: “In the course of interpretation, balance closeness of fit to the speaker's proclivities against simplicity of meanings ascribed.” This is in the spirit of Quine's and Davidson's maxims of interpretation. Is this the right maxim? Clearly it would need to be made far more precise, and anyway, which such maxims to accept pertains to a substantive theory of meaning, not to a metatheory that says what would be at issue between competing substantive theories. But if on reflection and testing, you are convinced to accept such a maxim, you can use it as a premise.¹⁰

¹⁰ Hattiangadi scrutinizes a claim about semantic concepts that she models on an expressivist's explanation of morality^{232e}. She labels this claim E_2 and finds it inconsistent: it “entails both that there is no need to give a straight naturalistic explanation of intentionality, and that what is needed is a naturalistic explanation of what it takes for us to grasp certain semantic concepts.” If it were so, it was a grievous fault, but I'll try not to answer it too grievously. The statement she labels E_2 isn't quite what I say. It includes, “Since semantic concepts are plan-laden, no straight naturalistic explanation of intentionality can be given.” But as I say, what I deny is that a straight *meaning analysis* of intentional terms can be given, not a straight *naturalistic explanation* of them. The

'Expresses' vs. 'Does Express'

Hattiangadi finds what may be a further characteristic that renders my explanations spurious.

The basic difficulty is that Gibbard's expressivism is explanatory only if 'means' *does* express the normative concept MEANS, but the assumption that 'means' *does* express the normative concept MEANS is incompatible with an expressivistic treatment of intentionality, according to which all such claims are normative, not descriptive"^{240b}.

I'm not clear, in this analysis, what the italicization is supposed to be doing. I take it is truistic (and in accord with the small caps convention) that the word 'means' voices the concept MEANS.¹¹ And if it voices this, then it *does* voice this. The word 'does' and the italics stress what is already being said. So if a word voices a normative, not purely descriptive concept, then it *does* voice such a concept, and expressivism for intentionality won't deny this.

Though I can't find literal import in Hattiangadi's use of an italicized 'does', I think I may get a glimmering of the thought behind it. The italicized auxiliary '*does*', I take it, is meant to exclude anything explained expressivistically. At the root of this part of her critique, I take it, is a claim about explanation: That a concept explained expressivistically can't serve to explain. This is a claim that I discussed above. Similar things apply to another passage in Hattiangadi's critique that uses an italicized '*does*'. "The choir share Gibbard's plans," is a normative claim, Hattiangadi correctly observes. A plan to accept it "does not entail that the choir *do* share Gibbard's plans, and thus does not explain how Gibbard's expressivism can be genuinely

part that is inconsistent with the first part as she renders it is this: "All that is needed for a fully naturalistic explanation of intentionality is a naturalistic explanation of what it takes to grasp semantic concepts.... And such an explanation can be given." I distinguish sharply, though, properties and concepts. This is right, I would say, for semantic properties, but for semantic concepts—which, as Hattiangadi notes, I hold to be plan-laden—the story is more complex. We get one kind of explanation of a semantic concept like MEANS from a naturalistic account of what it takes to grasp the concept. But theorists of meaning who agree on all matters purely naturalistic can disagree on whether the property so characterized is the property of grasping the concept MEANS. To believe that a subject grasps the concept MEANS and voices it as 'means' is, according to my metatheory, to plan to use the term 'means' in certain ways if one is that subject.

When Hattiangadi considers the possibility that according to me, claims about what grasp of semantic concepts consists in should be construed as substantive, like Jerry's substantive theory, she complains that E_2 as she has formulated it denies this. On this she is right; E_2 as she puts it needs, on my view, to be modified. E_2 substitutes in a thesis for semantic properties^{232e} that she labels E_1 . And she is quite right that the straight substitution doesn't work, since now the explanation is normative. But she complains, "So it seems that a straight naturalistic explanation of intentionality is needed after all. But E_2 entails that no straight naturalistic account of intentionality is possible." Again, I think that there must be a straight naturalistic account of intentionality; what I deny is that there can be a straight naturalistic meaning analysis of intentionality—of terms like 'means DOG'.

¹¹ I use the word 'voices' here instead of 'expresses' because I speak of "expressing" states of mind but "voicing" thoughts and concepts. But that is a matter of my own jargon, which needn't bind others.

explanatory for the choir”^{239g}. I have already allowed this; an explanation isn’t explanatory to an audience that doesn’t understand it. She continues, “The basic difficulty is that Gibbard’s expressivism is explanatory only if ‘means’ *does* express the normative concept MEANS, but the assumption that ‘means’ *does* express the normative concept MEANS is incompatible with an expressivistic treatment of intentionality, according to which all such claims are normative, not descriptive”^{240b}. Again, italicizing the word ‘*does*’ won’t add anything to the meaning as opposed to the emphasis, unless the auxiliary is meant to preclude anything that is to be explained expressivistically. And then the point is trivial and doesn’t bear of the cogency of my metatheory.

Hattiangadi’s book

As I said earlier, I thought that in my 1994 article, I had covered the kind of line that Hattiangadi takes in her book. I’ll now try to explain why I think it shows that the kind of line she takes in the book won’t work.

Reasonably enough, in her book, she doesn’t reiterate Kripke’s whole argument, but focuses on where she thinks it goes wrong. She is arguing, she tells us, for “semantic realism”, which she defines as the thesis that “correctness conditions and truth conditions play an essential role in the theory of meaning and understanding”^{2b}. “To understand the meaning of a declarative sentence is to grasp its truth conditions”^{2d}, and there is a fact of the matter whether ascriptions of meanings are correct. As I read her, the claim that really matters to her is something like this last, that there is a truth of the matter as to which meaning ascriptions are correct and which are incorrect. She may sound as if this claim and “semantic realism” as she defines it go together, so that on her view, if we want to establish that meaning ascriptions can be true or false, we’ll have to establish that correctness conditions and truth conditions are what explains meaning. But we can see, I think, that this last is not so. Horwich, for instance, thinks that there’s a truth of the matter as to what a word means, but that it doesn’t consist of the term’s correctness conditions. It consists, according to Horwich, of a “basic acceptance property” that causally explains the use of the word.

I myself agree with Hattiangadi and Horwich that ascriptions of meaning can be true or false, but I am suspicious of the doctrine that Hattiangadi defines as “semantic realism”—a thesis that Horwich rejects. Hattiangadi includes as a central tenet of semantic realism that “to understand the meaning of a declarative sentence is to grasp its truth conditions”^{2d}. This is true, I agree—but empty and unexplanatory. The truth condition of the sentence ‘Snow is white’ is that snow is white, and one grasps this condition if one understands the claim that snow is white. If one is an English speaker, one knows that this is the truth condition for this sentence, in that one knows and understands that ‘Snow is white’ is true if and only if snow is white. But that’s just a matter of knowing how the word ‘true’ works and understanding the sentence ‘Snow is white.’ In a

way, then, indeed, “to understand the meaning of a declarative sentence is to grasp its truth conditions”, and Hattiangadi includes this in her characterization of semantic realism. But this is because to grasp such a claim as to what the truth conditions are, one must grasp the meaning of the sentence that enters into the sentence that gives the truth conditions. The claim that the meaning of a sentence is given by its truth conditions can’t explain the notion of meaning. To state the truth condition for a sentence is to translate the sentence. The truth condition for the French sentence ‘La neige est blanche’ is that snow is white, and this does tell a monolingual English speaker what the sentence means. But this doesn’t explain meaning claims; it invokes synonymy, which is sameness of meaning. (I don’t mean here that *all* talk of “truth conditions” is empty and unexplanatory. But often such talk consists in explaining ordinary language in a more regimented language which brings out analytic connections in the language being explained. For example, the difference between ‘any’ and ‘every’ in English can be explained by rendering meanings in the language of first order logic, in such a way that the distinctions between the two words appear as matters of quantifier scope.)

I agree with Hattiangadi in holding that when a word means something, there’s something that makes it the case that it means what it does. And I agree with something else that I read her as holding: that what makes a sentence mean what it does could be put in naturalistic terms. Hattiangadi doesn’t profess knowing how to do this, and I don’t know how to do it either. In my book *Meaning and Normativity*, I declare that establishing what substantive theory of meaning gets matters right lies outside the scope of my project. My project in the book is not to devise and argue for a substantive theory of meaning, but to offer a metatheory, a theory of what ‘meaning’ means. I would love to establish a true and illuminating account of how the meaning of a word depends on its place in the world as specifiable naturalistically, but I don’t know how to do so. I do take it that what a word means is somehow grounded in the linguistic proclivities of the person whose word it is (and perhaps those of that person’s community), but I don’t claim to establish how this works. I do claim to establish what’s at issue among theorists who disagree as to what by way of linguistic proclivities the meaning of a word depends on and how. Roughly, I say, what’s at issue is how to use the word. A little more precisely, it is which sentences in one’s language which have the word in them to accept. But in saying this, I get ahead of myself. My chief point so far is that if I am reading Hattiangadi correctly, she and I agree that when a word is meaningful, there’s something that makes it the case that it means what it does.

Return, then, to Hattiangadi’s discussion in her book and claims that the concept MEANING is normative. What I would have hoped she would get from the 1994 discussion of mine that I incorporated into the book is that we must distinguish two questions: the substantive question of what makes it the case that a word means what it does, and the metatheoretical question of what’s at issue between people who advocate different answers to this substantive question. To answer this last is to explain the concept MEANING. She rejects Kripke’s “sceptical solution”,

and so do I. She also, though, rejects the claim “Meaning is normative.” Put this way the claim is obscure, I find, but Hattiangadi offers an interpretation that, as far as it goes, I agree with. She specifies a “strong sense” for the claim, wording it as follows: “To say that meaning is normative in this strong sense is to say that what a speaker means determines which uses of an expression she ought to make, where this ‘ought’ is understood to be ‘categorical’ in that it is not contingent of the agent’s desires or ends”⁶ⁱ. She calls this thesis “*Normativity*”, and taken the right way, it is indeed what I mean and make central to my own meta-theory. Hattiangadi, though, takes this to have implications that I insist it doesn’t have. She states, “Although *Normativity* would rule out all possible theories of meaning, it is untenable”^{7c}. I disagree with both parts of this claim. I show, in my 1994 article and my 2012 book that incorporates the article, how the thesis *Normativity* as she words it is not only tenable but hard to reject in any plausible way, and that it doesn’t rule out the correct substantive theory of meaning, whatever it turns out to be. Rather, it tells us what a proponent of the correct theory of meaning would be claiming.

Why would she think that *Normativity* rules out all possible theories of meaning? What it does is to say that a substantive theory—a theory of what sentences mean and why—will make claims that are normative. If a tenable normative claim won’t be analytically equivalent to any purely naturalistic thesis, then *Normativity* entails that claims about meaning likewise aren’t analytically equivalent to any purely naturalistic thesis. Should we think, then, that normative claims can’t be true and well founded? That would be a hard-line normative skepticism, and it would be as difficult to live with it as to believe that no claims of what sentences can mean are true and well-founded. It is sometimes thought that expressivism in explaining normative concepts rules out truth and falsehood for normative claims, but although I thought this when I wrote *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings*, I now suspect that we don’t know how to explain this robust sense of ‘true’, and that a minimal, deflationary sense is all we understand.¹² Claims explained expressivistically can be true or false in a deflationary sense. If the word ‘bad’ expresses opposition, then I will believe it true that suffering is bad if I agree with opposing suffering, and I will believe it false that suffering is bad if I disagree with opposing suffering. Expressivism, properly developed, doesn’t deny truth or falsity to the claims it purports to explain.

Perhaps the reason that Hattiangadi finds *Normativity* implausible is that she doesn’t have in mind the kinds of normative claims that, on my view, meaning claims are. On my view, claims as to what something means amount to claims as to which of our sentences we ought to accept in

¹² This sense requires more than deflation alone. It also requires something that epistemic modals and indicative conditionals with false antecedents don’t satisfy, that truth requires being entailed by the exact way things are. I discuss indicative conditionals in my “Two Recent Theories” (1981), and Seth Yalcin discusses epistemic modals in “Non-factualism” (2011). Even a crude emotivism like Ayer’s, though, shouldn’t deny that that ethical claims can be true or false. I am working on a paper to develop this point.

which evidential circumstances. Some philosophers think that talking of what we ought to believe and what sentences we ought to accept makes sense only if we can accept or reject our sentences at will, only if we can follow directions for which of our sentences to accept as we follow directions for what to do. It's quite right that we can't believe or disbelieve things at will, and that we can't accept or reject our own sentences at will. But as I have often said, some of the sorts of things that happen with accepting the sentences we believe we ought to accept happen too with doing things we believe we ought to do. We act by forming an immediate intention and acting on that intention. When in a game of chess, I advance my King's pawn to the 4th rank, I form an immediate intention to do so and act on that intention. We can't form immediate intentions at will, any more than we can form beliefs at will, but I can advance my pawn at will, and doing this consists in forming an immediate intention to do so and acting on it. Acting on an immediate intention is something we are designed, as it were, to do. We may not invariably act on our immediate intentions, but we are adapted to do so, and there's nothing that would constitute trying to act against one's intentions and succeeding. As for the oughts I have in mind, those oughts are primitive, or constructed from primitive oughts of the kind that Ewing proposed there were and that my expressivism is meant to explain. We ought, in this primitive sense, to form certain immediate intentions, such as to step out of the way of an approaching car, and we ought in this primitive sense to accept certain sentences of our own, such as 'Snow is white'. Doing this is different from believing that accepting one's sentence 'Snow is white' is desirable. This last consists in thinking that we ought, in the primitive sense, to desire to accept the sentence. I'll believe that it is desirable to accept 'Snow is green' if, say, I believe that my happiness and the happiness of all humanity depends on my accepting this, but I won't thereby believe that, in the primitive sense, I ought to accept 'Snow is green'.

The oughts in question here are categorical in the narrow sense that Hattiangadi specifies, that they are "not contingent of the agent's desires or ends". If I think that my happiness and everyone else's depends on my accepting my sentence 'Snow is green,' I'll desire to accept the sentence and make it my end to do so. That won't make it the case that in the primitive sense, I ought to do so. Categoricality in this sense isn't strictness; it is, as Hattiangadi says, lack of dependence on one's preferences and the like—and the oughts of usage can have this characteristic, on my view.

Normativity, then, as I read Hattiangadi's definition literally, is not implausible, and it doesn't, rule out all possible theories of meaning. What it does is hold that theories of meaning are normative theories. The meaning of a word in a person's mouth, I try claiming in my book, is a matter of the conditions under which she ought to accept sentences with that word. A theory of meaning will say, in effect, under what conditions one ought to accept a sentences and under what conditions one ought to reject it—where the ought here is in the primitive sense that can

apply to acts, to beliefs, and to preferences. *Normativity*, as Hattiangadi defines the claim, doesn't rule out such a theory; it invites such a theory.

Despite what Hattiangadi claims, then, *Normativity* as she defines the condition is far from entailing that there's no truth to the matter as to what something means—unless in general there's no truth to ought claims. 'Snow is white' means what it does in that we speakers of English ought to accept it in certain conditions. We ought to accept it in virtue, among other things, of our linguistic proclivities. There's a truth of the matter, then, as to what 'Snow is white' means, in that those conditions are the ones under which we as English speakers ought to accept the sentence. Since we ought to accept the sentence under those conditions, it's true that we ought to accept it under those conditions. That's the deflationary aspect of truth. It applies to oughts explained expressivistically just as it applies to any other declarative sentence.

The truth of a theory of meaning, then, isn't ruled out if MEANING is a normative concept, and semantic realism, in the precise sense that Hattiangadi states, isn't required for there to be a truth of the matter as to what words and sentences mean. There are ways of explaining meaning that don't rely on truth conditions to do the explanatory work.

According to Hattiangadi, Kripke doesn't have a conclusive argument that all attempts to define meaning will fail unless he can establish the normativity of meaning. She sets out, then, to refute the normativity of meaning. I agree with her that Kripke doesn't have a general refutation of all accounts of what meaning consists in. I claim there is a further question to ask, though, the question of what's at issue between advocates of competing substantive theories of meaning—and I suggest that the issue is normative. She and I agree, then, that there isn't a good argument for meaning skepticism, but she also says this: "Kripke's skeptical argument can have full generality and *a priori* status, so long as we grant the assumption that meaning is normative"^{6e}. I hold, on the contrary, that the normativity of meaning doesn't entail meaning skepticism—though it would if we could establish normative skepticism in general. Here again, I am reading "the normativity of meaning" as the claim that the concept MEANING is a normative concept, and not something about the nature of meaning.

"Once we repudiate *Normativity*," Hattiangadi says, "the sceptic can no longer show that there can be no fact of the matter what anybody means"^{7c}. This way of putting her contentions brings in the term 'fact'. Whether there's any such "fact", on my view, depends on what the term means. As I say, there is a truth of the matter: if by 'chien' Frenchmen mean DOG, then that Frenchmen mean DOG by 'chien' is a truth. If, then, a "fact" is a truth, a true thought, then there's a fact of the matter. This truth, though, isn't naturalistic, and so if, on the other hand, 'fact' means a true thought that is naturalistic, then there's no fact of the matter. As for alternative candidate meaning ascriptions, on my view, many might be coherent and not inconsistent with anything in the sheer meaning of 'meaning'—but not all of these are true.

Some of them are inconsistent with each other, and as with anything else, any two candidates that are inconsistent with each other aren't both true.

In short, then, Hattiangadi says, "The attempt to do without semantic realism leads to self-refutation". But as I have noted, she defines 'semantic realism' in a way that excludes substantive theories like that of Horwich which aren't self-refuting—or at least aren't shown to be self-refuting by any argument that Hattiangadi attempts. According to Horwich, in agreement with Hattiangadi, there is a truth of the matter as to what a person means by a word or a sentence. She also doesn't include Quine-Davidson-like theories of interpretation, and although Quine indeed does deny that there is a unique truth of the matter as to what a term or a sentence means, it's not clear that this has been shown to be an inescapable upshot of an interpretive approach like his. As far as I can see, nothing that Hattiangadi says is meant to refute theories like these, theories that reject semantic realism as she defines it but take there to be a truth of the matter as to what a sentence means.

In arguing against the claim *Normativity*, Hattiangadi asserts that the term 'correct' is not normative or evaluative, but is a placeholder for 'refers' and the like^{52g}. I don't follow how this "placeholder" account is supposed to work, but I would certainly regard 'correct' as a normative term in most of its meanings. The term 'normative' gets used in a variety of ways, but I understand the central philosophical sense to be "fraught with ought", as Sellars is said to have put it, or "oughty", as I think Kevin Mulligan put it. It is correct to believe thoughts that are true, and as I argue in my book, this is explained if to say that it is *correct* to believe a thing is to say that in the objective sense of 'ought', one ought to believe it.

Action-guidingness doesn't apply to the correctness of a thought, Hattiangadi says, since semantic realism doesn't say anything about agents^{53c}. I agree that correctness isn't inherently action-guiding, since at least in unusual circumstances, one can reasonably act against it, as when one lies to an ax murderer by telling him something incorrect about where his intended victim is. Correctness, on my view, is a matter of oughts in the objective sense, and oughts apply not only to action but to beliefs and to accepting sentences in one's language. It is correct for me to accept my sentence 'Snow is white,' in that in light of all the facts, including that snow is white, I ought to accept this sentence of mine. (Remember that the 'ought' here applies not to an action, but to accepting a sentence—which is not an action.) Semantic qualities aren't inherently action-guiding, I agree, but they are normative in that they are acceptance-guiding. They concern what sentences it is correct to accept. (As for Hattiangadi's contention that correctness is just a matter of what refers to what, I haven't managed to follow how this is meant to work, but I do spend a chapter on how to understand concepts of reference as normative. I take it that the concept DENOTES is normative, and that there will be a correct naturalistic account of what denoting consists in; which such account is correct is, according to me, a normative question.)

I have been arguing that the distinction between explaining the concept of meaning and explaining properties of meaning, if Hattiangadi had taken it on, should have kept her from taking the central line she takes in her 2007 book *Oughts and Thoughts*. There is no legitimate question of whether meaning properties (such as the property of meaning DOG by a word) are normative; it is concepts that are normative or not. Neither Hattiangadi nor I claim to have explained meaning properties, but we both take it that they are natural properties amenable to scientific inquiry. It is, as I say, the concept MEANING, not the property, that I argue can be coherently and helpfully treated as normative. That might not be the most illuminating way to treat the concept: an alternative is to offer a naturalistic “reform definition”, as Brandt does for the concepts GOOD and RIGHT. Or alternatively, traditional ways of treating meaning may be off track, as Quine maintained, so that no close successor of an ordinary concept MEANING will figure in a mature and illuminating scientific account of language and thinking. Reform definitions, though, always foreclose some questions, and some of these questions may remain important. Not always: Newtonians’ reform definitions for physical terms like ‘energy’, ‘momentum’, and ‘mass’ didn’t foreclose old questions that subsequently proved still worth asking. We might hope that linguistics and psychology could achieve such a success with a reform definition of the term ‘meaning’. But it may well be that no such fully successful reform is possible, and that the questions that we still need to ask and that useful naturalistic reforms don’t take care of can be formulated using a normative concept MEANING that more or less fits the treatment I offer in my book.

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