The Purpose of the Essential Indexical

Catherine Legg

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ABSTRACT

This paper takes indexicality as a case-study for critical examination of the distinction between semantics and pragmatics as currently conceived in mainstream philosophy of language. Both a 'pre-indexical' and 'post-indexical' analytic formal semantics are examined and found wanting, and instead an argument is mounted for a 'properly pragmatist pragmatics', according to which we do not work out what signs mean in some abstract overall sense and then work out to what use they are being put; rather, we must understand to what use signs are being put in order to work out what they mean.

KEYWORDS

Indexicality, semantics, pragmatics, pragmatism, Perry, Kaplan, Peirce, index, sub-index, precept

"The actual world cannot be distinguished from a world of imagination by any description."

Charles Peirce[1]

1. Introduction

In 1938, the modern distinction between "syntax", "semantics", and "pragmatics" was first published by Charles Morris. The basic ideas for this three-way distinction were gleaned from Morris' reading of Peirce, and Peirce's thought can be discerned in his definitions of syntax as concerning the relationship between *signs themselves*, semantics as concerning the relationship between *signs and their objects*, and pragmatics as concerning the relationship between *signs and their interpreters*. Thanks to Morris' friendship with Carnap, the three labels came to play a fundamental structuring role in analytic philosophy of language. Yet if one examines the ways in which they have been used since then, one encounters a remarkable instability in interpretations. The exact borderline between semantics and pragmatics is subject to much confusion and dispute.[2] The definition of "pragmatics" seem to have shifted from Morris and Carnap's initial concern with the relationship between signs and their users

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[1] Peirce, CP, 3.363

[2] Recently a number of high-profile publications have attempted to resolve this issue – e.g. Gendler-Szabo (2005), Horn and Ward (2004) – but a new consensus still seems elusive.

(covering such issues as performative utterances), to a concern with the way the meaning of an utterance varies with context.[3] A natural bridge between these two does exist insofar as sign-users factor information about particular contexts into their choices to use signs in particular communicative acts − nevertheless they are not the same. For instance, one cannot distinguish between *promises* and ordinary assertions solely in terms of the contexts in which promises are made. One also needs to understand what the promiser (and the promisee) are *doing* with their words.

Indexicality is a linguistic phenomenon which is often argued to fall between the two stools of "semantics" and "pragmatics". So I will explore the question of the proper relationship between the two using indexicality as a case-study. I will suggest that in order to clarify what 'pragmatics' could or should mean, it is no mere genealogical pedantry to return to the original pragmat*ism*. Although Morris was very influenced by Peirce, his other big influence was the logical positivists. In fact his book "Foundations of the Theory of Signs" was first published as part of volume 1 of their ambitious but doomed, *Encyclopedia of the Unified Sciences*. Now that philosophers have become more aware of the limitations of logical positivism, one hopes that more possibilities can be seen in Peirce's detailed triadic taxonomy of signs than Morris and Carnap saw.

2. What Is Indexicality?

If we wish to inquire into the proper relation between semantics and pragmatics in the light of pragmatism, using indexicality as a case-study, we might ask: "What *use* is indexicality?", "What would we be unable to *do* with language without it?" But first we need to consider what phenomena should be covered by the term 'indexical'.[4]

One currently popular definition calls indexical any *term whose reference shifts from context to context*. So for instance it is argued that 'tiger' refers to the same mammalian natural kind in every context of utterance, and is thus non-indexical, whereas 'I' refers to whoever is the speaker in the context of utterance, and is thus indexical. Similarly, 'here' refers to the place where it is uttered, 'now' to the time at which it is uttered. I will call these three *classical indexicals*.[5]

However merely given the definition above, the category is potentially much broader. Thus the Stanford Encyclopedia entry, "Indexicals"[6] also suggests including:

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[3] See for instance Stalnaker (1970), Gazdar (1979), Kempson (1988), Bach (2004). A more detailed account of contemporary understandings of pragmatics is given below in section 4.

[4] also sometimes referred to as 'token-reflexive expressions', or 'egocentric particulars'

[5] also 'actual', for those who follow David Lewis.

[6] David Braun, "Indexicals", *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/indexicals/.

- *demonstratives*, e.g. 'this' and 'that', which rely on pointing behaviour in context
- *personal pronouns*, e.g "he is dirty", said in the presence of a dirty person
- *certain adjectives* such as 'rich', as someone might truly be said to be rich in one context and not rich in others
- *vague expressions*, e.g. 'bald' which different contexts might require to be precisified in different ways.

Yet the current mainstream definition of indexicality is much narrower than this. For instance, Perry and Kaplan argue that demonstratives should be thought of as distinct from classical indexicals because some further 'demonstration' in context is needed to secure the reference of 'that', unlike 'I', where merely uttering the word is sufficient to indicate the speaker. Brandom points out that when I pick an object out of a crowded room by saying '*That* thing...', which object is thereby picked out can depend greatly on the rest of what I have to say about 'that thing' ("That thing has a very finely worked lid", as opposed to, "That thing should be eaten as soon as possible"), and also "a great deal of social stage-setting" which lies behind our mutual understanding of the practice of pointing.[7] He goes so far as to reserve the term 'index' solely for classical indexicals, for only these provide an input to an independently determinable character function.[8]

3. 'Pure Semantics' and its Downfall: 'Pre-Indexical' Analytic Formal Semantics

Analytical philosophy of language began to grapple with indexicality through the 1960s and 70s, although its importance was already highlighted and described as 'nothing new' by Bar-Hillel in the 1950s.[9] This engagement posed a profound threat to an apparently elegant vision of formal semantics whose guiding role in shaping the development of analytic philosophy cannot be overstated.

We may define such a "pure", or "pre-indexical" formal semantics schematically, roughly following Tarski (1933), as follows. Assuming:

- **L** is our language
- **U** is the set of all existent things (frequently assumed to exhaust reality)
- **I** is an interpretation function which connects every constant in **L** with an element in **U**, and assigns to every predicate in **L** the appropriate subset of **U**

Then:

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[7] E.g. *Making it Explicit*, pp. 460-461
[8] E.g. *Between Saying and Doing*, p. 58.
[9] Bar-Hillel (1954). Albert Atkin also credits Reichenbach (1947).

- a sentence ϕ in **L** is true iff every individual denoted by the sentence does lie in the extension of the predicate in **L** to which it is assigned by the interpretation function.

It was initially hoped that such a model would provide a complete account of a sentence's truth-conditions, and thus its meaning. Yet it has no place for a classical indexical such as 'here'. 'Here' cannot be represented using bound variables, as it does not mean 'some place', but '*this* place'. But it cannot be a constant either, given the way its meaning shifts between utterances.

It was initially thought that the problem could be solved by somehow planting indices into truth conditions themselves. Thus Davidson wrote:

The theory of meaning undergoes a systematic but not puzzling change: corresponding to each [indexical expression] there must in the theory be a phrase that relates the truth conditions of sentences in which the expression occurs to changing times and speakers. Thus the theory will entail sentences like the following:
     'I am tired' is true as (potentially) spoken by *p* at *t* if and only if *p* is tired at *t*.[10]

In other words, truth-conditions in **L** must be given by sentences containing free variables ranging over actual persons, times and places.[11] We might call this an 'externalist' semantics of indexicality. Similarly, Quine wrote:

   ...the logical theory which the canonical framework makes possible treats...the indicator words as having fixed references, supposed intended, even where we do not need to say which[12]

But then along came the problem of the so-called *essential* indexical. Perry's presentation of the issue was particularly influential. The "problem", he suggests, is that in certain cases one cannot explain a person's behavior in terms of his beliefs unless at least some of those beliefs are somehow "essentially" (or we might more usefully say "internally") indexical. In one example, Perry chases a mystery shopper around the supermarket trying to tell him that he has a torn sack of sugar spilling out of his trolley, finally stopping because he realises that the shopper with the torn sack *is him*. Perry claims one cannot explain the shopper's stopping his cart without attributing to him a belief literally expressible only in the form "*I* am the one making a mess". It will not do to consider that 'I' might be shorthand for some "concept which I alone 'fit'" (for instance, Perry offers "the only bearded philosopher in a Safeway Store West of the Mississippi"). For he can mistakenly believe that he doesn't satisfy the description, or he can believe that he satisfies the description but not know that he is the *only* person who satisfies it, or it might even be the case that there is no description which would

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[10] Davidson (1967), pp. 319-20.
[11] Voss and Sayward (1976)
[12] Quine (1960), p 183. *(Quine is possibly problematic though as in earlier parts of the book he seems to be producing an internalist semantics…)*

uniquely identify him, even under conditions of complete general knowledge. In all such cases the explanation of his stopping the cart will fail.[13] [14]

The Davidsonian semantic framework *gives the wrong answer for such cases.* For following the formula we get:

> 'I believe I am making a mess' is true as (potentially) spoken by p at t if and only if p believes p is making a mess at t.

Perry does believe that p is making a mess at t, insofar as he believes that the man pushing the trolley with the sugar-trail is making a mess, and the man pushing the trolley with sugar-trail is in fact Perry Yet *he does not grasp the identity*, and therefore does not truly have the belief "I am making a mess". Perry diagnoses the problem as undermining the idea, which he claims descends from Frege, that "propositions are individuated *via* 'concepts'"[15], where concepts are understood as descriptions whose meaning is entirely general (context-independent).

4. 'Post-Indexical' Analytic Formal Semantics

There is now a confusing variety of attempts to incorporate indexicality into analytic formal semantics. Arguably the most widely accepted is that of David Kaplan.[16] Here reality is envisaged to consist not only of a set **U** of individuals, but also a set **W** of (possible) worlds, and a set **C** of contexts. These contexts are possessed of features such as times, locations (both intra- and inter-world) and 'agents'. In Kaplan's terminology, the meaning of an indexical term such as 'I' consists in a certain *character,* which takes into account the particular *context* in which it is uttered, in order to deliver an overall *content* to a proposition. Thus character is a function from contexts to contents: 'I' is a function whose value at any context is 'the context's agent'.

The interpretation function now not only assigns constants and predicates in **L** to elements and sets of elements in **U** respectively but also performs a remarkable range of further tasks. It delineates a context of utterance, determines a unique agent for that context, and maps the reference of 'I' onto that agent − not only in this world but all other possible worlds in which it might be appropriate to say that

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[13] Perry (1979), p. 7.

[14] It is useful to distinguish between the claim that terms are *essentially* indexical − their indexicality is irreducible to non-indexical semantic functions − and the claim that they are *purely* indexical − indexing is their sole function and they have no further non-indexical semantic dimension. (For a similar point made with respect to iconicity, see Legg, 2008). Signs such as 'here' and 'now' – being *words*, are not purely indexical. Nevertheless they are essentially indexical. This distinction deals with an objection to essential indexicality by Milikan (1990)

[15] Perry (1979), p. 6.

[16] Kaplan (1989).

the 'same agent' appears. The original theory has gained some significant epicycles. This new semantics has given rise to a "two-dimensional modal logic" whereby a 'secondary intension' corresponds to content, and a 'primary intension' to character.[17] This two-dimensional framework has been widely developed by others and put to work in a variety of contexts, particularly philosophy of mind.

In contrast to Kaplan, Perry wishes to avoid making sentences true only at a times and places. His solution to the problem of the essential indexical is rather different, involving a complex distinction between 'belief-states' and 'objects of belief'. However Kaplan's arguably less intensional solution has been more popular.

The standard analytic approach to indexicality may be summarised by asking: According to this picture, what would language without indexicality be like? It is thought that a large portion of it would be unchanged, the part that corresponds to so-called 'regular declarative sentences'. Examples include:

P1 "Ice floats in water"

P2 "Wellington is the capital of New Zealand".

In these sentences, in Kaplan's terms, character and content are thought to coincide. "Ice" refers to ice and "Wellington" refers to Wellington, no matter who utters those words, and when and where. We *would* be unable to say certain other specific things, for instance:

P3 "I'm floating now!"

P4 "We are in Wellington."

However according to the standard picture, *the character of P3 and P4 is antecedently expressible, even if the content is not.* Thus P3's character is a clear determinate meaning, something like, "The speaker is floating now", where the meaning of the predicate ('floating') is determinately given, independent of whatever arguments will be plugged into it.

Thus it is envisaged that semantics determines meaning proper, and the main function of pragmatics is to map certain special-case utterances, corresponding to certain special non-assertoric functions, onto the meanings laid down by semantics. *Essential* indexicality is commonly supposed to hold *only* in modal and epistemic contexts. In his Locke Lectures, Brandom attempts to drag even such cases back into the analytic fold, writing:

> ....purely non-indexical vocabulary *can* serve as an adequate *pragmatic* metavocabulary for indexical vocabulary. That is, one can *say* (that is, describe), in wholly non-indexical terms, everything one needs to *do* in order to *use* indexical vocabulary.[18]

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[17] Influential in the development of this framework were Stalnaker (1978) and Humberstone & Davies (1980).

[18] (Brandom, 2008), *p. 33 in online DOC file, not sure about book*

All this has greatly influenced mainstream understanding of the relationship between semantics and pragmatics, where it is generally assumed that semantics gives a full account of "what is said"[19], while pragmatics is some kind of side-issue pertaining to a minority of sentences. This overwhelming attitude is well illustrated at the end of the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* entry "Pragmatics", where the authors helpfully list what they see as the key definitions of pragmatics in the literature (Perry and Korta, 2011). Here are some examples:

- Kempson (1988). (A classic account.) "Semantics provides a complete account of sentence meaning for the language, [by] recursively specifying the truth conditions of the sentences of the language...Pragmatics provides an account of how sentences are used in utterances to convey information in context."

- Fotion (1995). "Pragmatics is the study of language which focuses attention on the users and the context of language use rather than on reference, truth, or grammar."

- Bach (2004). "Pragmatic information is (extralinguistic) information that arises from an actual act of utterance, and is relevant to the hearer's determination of what the speaker is communicating. Whereas semantic information is encoded in what is uttered, pragmatic information is generated by...the act of uttering it."

- Katz (1977) offers an interesting criterion of pure semantic content: it consists in, "only those aspects of the meaning of the sentence that an ideal speaker-hearer of the language would know *in an anonymous letter situation*."

- Kaplan (1989) displays some thought-provoking ambivalence: "The fact that a word or phrase has a certain meaning clearly belongs to semantics. On the other hand, a claim about the basis for ascribing a certain meaning to a word or phrase does not belong to semantics...Perhaps, because it relates to how the language is used, it should be categorized as part of...*pragmatics*..., or perhaps, because it is a fact about semantics, as part of...*Metasemantics*."

This choice made by mainstream 20th century philosophy to basically 'cordon off' pragmatic considerations into a side-alley of meaning is intriguing to speculate on vis a vis its motives, and what it has achieved institutionally (albeit probably unconsciously). I will now throw it open to radical critique.

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[19] Extensive wrangling exists in the literature over the meaning of just this phrase.

5. Indexicality in a Semeiotic Context

Let us now turn back to the original pragmatism. What use are indexicals according to Peirce? In his introductory text 'What is a Sign?" Peirce answers the question metaphorically by invoking the skeleton's function in the human body, which is to 'hold us stiffly up to reality'.[20] But what does this mean?

It has been widely explicated in the literature how Peirce's concept of the index occurs in the context of a triadic distinction between signs, drawn with respect to how those signs pick out their objects. *Icons* pick out their object by resembling them (thereby using a monadic property, that the sign has whether the object exists or not), *indices* pick out their object by means of some brute dyadic relation, such as pointing, and *symbols* pick out their object *via* some kind of 'third' independent, arbitrary convention or rule.[21]

It is important to recognise that as with all distinctions deriving from his short list of three fundamental categories, Peirce distinguishes between icon, index and symbol in *functional* rather than *sortal* terms. This allows any given sign to be a mix of icon, index and symbol, enabling considerable subtlety of analysis. For example the indexical 'now' indexes a particular time by virtue of being uttered at that time, and is at the same time also a symbol insofar as one needs to learn (in English) that it is the phoneme 'now' which plays that particular linguistic function.

So what is the logical *function* of indexicals? Basically it is to determine what our language-use 'is about' – its subject-matter. So Peirce writes:

…pure likenesses, – can never convey the slightest information. [An icon] leaves the spectator uncertain whether it is a copy of something actually existing or a mere play of fancy. The same thing is true of general language and of all *symbols*. No combination of words (excluding proper nouns, and in the absence of gestures or other indicative concomitants of speech) can ever convey the slightest information.[22]

Albert Atkin (2005) has given a usefully detailed account of Peirce's theory of indexicality. This account extends beyond the pure pointing of so-called classical indexicals (Atkin criticises an earlier influential paper by Goudge for trying to read Peirce on this model). To this end he analyses the distinctive functionality of indexicals into 5 separate aspects. They:

- are significatory. This is analysed as having two parts: *physical contiguity* and *directing our attention*.

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[20] Peirce "What Is a Sign?" (1894) https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/us/peirce1.htm

[21] An excellent account is (Atkin 2005). Peirce experimented with many alternative definitions of 'icon', 'index', and 'symbol' through his career. Some examples are *CP*, 2.304, 2.92, 2.247-9, 3.363, 4.531, 5.73-4, 8.335.

[22] Peirce, "What is a Sign?"

- have their characteristics independently of interpretation

- refer to individuals

- assert nothing

- do not resemble or share any law-like relation with their objects.

Within this broad functionality, Atkin, following Peirce, identifies three kinds or 'stages' of indexicality:

The *index proper*: direct, entirely unmediated causal relationship between sign and object – e.g. the weather-vane representing the direction of the wind.

The *sub-index*: demonstratives, e.g. "this", "that". This category of index is slightly more symbolically mediated (for the reasons acknowledged by Perry and Kaplan in their discussion of demonstratives[23])

The *precept*: these are indications mediated or guided by *descriptions* (thus, they are part-symbol). For e.g. "the person with the big hat", "the stuff that floats". Here, rather than putting the sign-interpreter into some kind of direct contact with the object, the indexical sign presents a *set of instructions* which, if followed will put the sign-user in contact with the object ("Look for a big hat and then locate the person under it"). This third category doesn't fit the final two criteria of indices (that they assert nothing, and share no law-like relation to their object). Neverthess, Atkin claims that they are clearly indexical in that they fit the first three criteria. (They are significatory, have their characteristics independently of interpretation, and refer to individuals.)

This third category of index, the precept, has very wide application in language and thought. *Think about its role in inquiry*! Inquiry is essentially a set of instructions for directing the attention of an intelligent being – showing them how they can, if they choose, have certain experiences. The pragmatic maxim encapsulates this. And precepts don't just consist in explicit sets of instructions, as in "the person with the big hat". A *natural kind term* is also an implicit set of instructions. e.g. "Electricity", "Water". In fact the classical indexicality that has just a pure pointing function is called by Peirce 'degenerate'. 'Genuine' indices have *iconic involvement*.[24] Only in this way are they really useful. This paper began with analytic philosophy's apparently clear contrast: "I am a mammal" is 'an indexical sentence', "Tigers are mammals" is a 'non-indexical sentence'. Things are no longer that simple.

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[23] Although, alas, they missed seeing that this point applies to classical indexicals too.

[24] *Some examples would be good here.*

6. Indexical Purpose

"What *use* is indexicality?", "What would we be unable to *do* with language without it?" The Peircean perspective shows that indexical signs are required for *any proposition to have a subject*. (in other words: for us to be able to talk about anything). We saw that Katz suggested that pure semantics consists in the meaning that is understood in "an anonymous letter situation". So, let us imagine that we find the words, "The table is solid", written on a piece of paper in the street.[25] This is a perfectly grammatical indicative sentence in English. But what fact does it report? Just as stated, nothing. For which table is signified? This is indeterminate. The point here is not that the person who wrote the sentence must have had some specific table in mind and we do not *know* which one, but if we did we would know the meaning of the sentence. The point is that they may not have had any specific table in mind, and even if they did it, does not help us ascribe a meaning to the sentence.

But this failure arguably exposes what is going on when a sentence does succeed in expressing a proposition. Consider the sentence, "Ayers Rock is solid". If I utter this sentence to you now, it likely expresses a proposition ascribing a distinctive property to a particular, unique feature of the Australian landscape. However, it only does so insofar as you and I have come into experiential contact (whether direct or mediated by TV, the testimony of friends, and so on) with Ayers Rock. Consider a possible world in which every neighbourhood contains a large rock, which the locals call 'Ayers Rock'. In such a case, the sentence would not function in the same way, as its potential audience will not know which rock is meant. You and I unwittingly rely on the fact that *this* world is not like that in interpreting the sentence. Relatedly, Peirce writes:

> It is true that if a new island were found, say, in the Arctic Seas, its location could be approximately shown on a map which should have no lettering, meridians, nor parallels; for the familiar outlines of Iceland, Nova Zemla, Greenland, etc., serve to indicate the position. In such a case, we should avail ourselves of our knowledge that there is no second place that any being on this earth is likely to make a map of which has outlines like those of the Arctic shores. This experience of the world we live in renders the map something more than a mere icon and confers upon it the added characters of an *index.*[26]

Lefebvre suggests that the unindexed sentence on the paper should be understood to express a 'pre-proposition', or propositional function. Logically speaking, it is equivalent to, "_is a solid table": in Peircean terms, this is a *rheme*:

> ...in hearing someone state "this table is solid" in a room where there is no table to be seen, and in the absence of any further contextualization, or in reading the sentence in an English grammar

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[25] For this example I'm indebted to (Lefebvre, *forthcoming*)

[26] The same point is made, in this case re. distinguishing indices from icons, in Peirce, "What is a Sign?"

textbook, the statement will cease being a proposition for is cannot be connected to any particular object in any universe of discourse; it lacks sufficient indexicality. Of course the demonstrative article will continue to play its syntactic role and, supposing that the hearer or reader possesses collateral knowledge regarding language and tables, the sentence will excite in his imagination some composite image of tables such as one of them should be (i.e. solid) were it to determine the proposition to represent it. In this sort of situation, however, the statement doesn't refer to a fact any more, but rather to the mere *possibility* of a fact. Such a sign, a sign interpreted as the sign of some possible thing, Peirce called a *rheme*." (p. 11)

Lefebvre goes on to consider the intriguing issue of how a rheme "grows into" a proposition (or dicent). He means the organic metaphor quite literally, and he writes that this growth is "assured" by the particular context of utterance, which is a vital part of the semiotic movement. (He also points out that the dicent can also grow further into an argument – for instance if a courier arrives at the door with a heavy parcel enquiring where to leave it, and is told "The table is solid".)[27]

Analytic formal semantics assumes that an "interpretation function" sorts out all of these assignments, magically. Recall that according to Tarski's schema a function **I** maps all constants and predicates in the language **L** (in Peirce's terms: representamens) with elements and sets of elements in **U** (in Peirce's terms: objects). *How* does this happen? No-one ever asks. But this puts some of the most interesting features of language out of sight, theoretically. *We* sign-users are the ones who match up representamens with objects. and there is actually a great range of different ways we do this, which is fascinating, and repays study. Also, semiosis does not stop with the sign-object relation. A huge part of meaning also consists in the way that interpretation and reinterpretations enables the meanings of terms to *develop*. This is also left out of the Tarskian picture. Yet it is essential for understanding, for example, the activity of science. To sum up then, for Peirce, language without indexicality would be devoid of all propositions, and would not be 'about' anything. This is not much of a language.

7. A Pragmatist Pragmatics

What, then, of the relation between semantics and pragmatics? The fact that the borderline between contemporary semantics and pragmatics is subject to much confusion and dispute is no accident, since the project of separating the two as currently conceived is incoherent.

Kaplan's neat equation: ("character" + "context" = "content") will not wash because character as a pre-existing, independent building block of meaning does not exist. Rather, our reference to things using signs (traditionally seen as the domain of semantics) depends upon each and every proposition containing some indication of something in a particular experiential context (traditionally seen as the

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[27] *Compare Perry's hiking trail e.g., p. 4.…*

domain of pragmatics), and this indication cannot be made fully explicit. In that sense we might say (contra Russell) that *no entirely definite descriptions are possible*. Rather, when we use language, by means of precepts we provide instructions for other people to come into existential contact with the same things we have come into existential contact with. At the same time, this is not to deny that these instructions are usually accompanied by some general description of what experiences to expect. There is always a symbolic component as well.[28]

We do not work out what signs mean in some abstract overall sense and then work out to what use they are being put. (In this way, Bach's claim that semantic content is "encoded" in sentences is most theoretically unhelpful). Rather, one has to understand to what use signs are being put in order to work out what they mean. Once again, Lefebvre points this out particularly well:

> ...we cannot distinguish between a sign and its usage. To be a sign already implies being interpreted, already implies fulfilling a semiotic function, already implies occupying a place within the vast seniosic chain which comprises the collateral knowledge that enables it to be interpreted in one way or another. Within a Peircean conception of semiosis there is no zero degree of the sign except in methodological fictions.[29]

> That we should define things through their use rather than through a metaphysical quest for essence surely constitutes one of the most important legacies of Peirce's pragmatist philosophy.[30]

University of Waikato

(Comments on this paper would be very welcome: clegg@waikato.ac.nz)

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[28] *This shows that the distinction between externalism and internalism is a false dichotomy.*
[29] (Lefebvre, 2007), p. 15
[30] (Lefebvre, 2007), p. 14

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