

HUMBOLDT CONVERSATIONS IN PHILOSOPHY

16:00 - 18:00
GWZ H2 1.16

MAY 22 2019



I am a Junior Research Fellow in Philosophy at The Queen's College, Oxford, and a research affiliate at ConceptLab, University of Oslo. Most of my research relates in one way or another either to linguistic (especially semantic) knowledge, or to knowledge-how, and often to both. More broadly, I'm interested in the philosophy of mind, epistemology and action theory, the metaphysics of language and meaning, rationality and philosophy of normativity, and virtue ethics. I also have a general interest in the work of Gilbert Ryle, especially his less popular and well-developed writings on thinking and improvisation.

Before joining Queen's I spent two years at the University of Oslo's Centre for the Study of Mind in Nature (CSMN), initially as a visitor completing my DPhil (Oxford 2016), and then in a research position. Before the DPhil I did an MA in Philosophy at Reading and a BA in P.P.E. at Brasenose College, Oxford.

NATALIA WAIGHTS HICKMAN Oxford

REASONS-SENSITIVITY, ILLUSIONS OF THOUGHT AND THE QUESTION OF SEMANTIC NORMATIVITY

The thesis that meaning is normative is widely understood to be that facts about what expressions mean put speakers under a *prima facie* obligation to use those expressions in stating what is true. I believe that so understood, the thesis is false; but, appealing to Ryle and others, I argue that this construal of the thesis confuses the categories of *speech* and *language*, and is unmotivated. The main aim of the paper is to reconsider the question whether meaning is normative, reframing it in a way that restores its connections with the normativity of thought and of cooperative practice, which once defined the ideological context of theorizing about language and its mastery. The first positive part of the paper investigates semantic deviance and error in connection with failures of sense or thought, with particular reference to the semantic system of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, but also in connection with the (less niche) idea of a semantic category-mistake. The second positive part considers whether general norms of practical rationality might explain why speakers are under (defeasible) normative pressure to use words and expressions in line with their conventional meaning.

For more information, additional reading and registration please contact:
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