On Some Concepts of Pragmatics

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In an earlier paper,[1] I discussed the pragmatical concept of intension in order to defend its scientific legitimacy. I gave only an informal analysis, not an exact explication. Chisholm[2] is certainly right in saying that my account was an oversimplification. But this was intentional; in particular, I deliberately left aside not only the possible effects of vagueness, but also those of factual errors of the speaker Karl (see my references to these errors

as possibly falsifying the linguist's results, p. 36, line 20). I would agree with Chisholm in preferring the third of the three ways he mentions for refining the analysis, the one using the concept of belief.

It seems that a more thorough analysis of intension, belief, and related concepts would require a conceptual framework of theoretical pragmatics. I shall mention here a few concepts that might come into consideration for a basis of such a framework. I will state merely the general form and roughly indicate the meaning of these concepts without attempting any analysis. I think today that the basic concepts of pragmatics are best taken, not as behavioristically defined disposition concepts in the observation language, but as theoretical constructs in the theoretical language, introduced on the basis of postulates and connected with the observation language by rules of correspondence.

The concept of *belief* is sometimes construed, for example, by Church, as a relation between a person and a proposition. I previously made an attempt at explicating it as a relation between a person and a sentence. Perhaps both concepts are useful; the first is nonpragmatical; it characterizes a state of a person not necessarily involving language. The second concept is pragmatical. Let us write '*B*' for the first, '*T*' for the second. Let a sentence of the form

(1) $B(X,t,p)$

say that the person *X* at the time *t* believes that *p*. This is understood in a weak sense, as not implying either that *X* is aware of the belief or that he is able to verbalize it. Let a sentence of the form

(2) $T(X,t,S,L)$

say that *X* at *t* takes the sentence *S* of the language *L* to be true (consciously or not). For the sake of simplicity, I take here both *B* and *T* as simple relations. In a more adequate systematization, both should be as concepts of degree.

Now the pragmatical concept of *intension* serves as a connecting link between *B* and *T*. Let a sentence of the form

(3) Int(p,S,L,X,t)

say that the proposition *p* is the intension of the sentence *S* in the language *L* for *X* at *t*. (Another alternative would take "sense," as used by Church, instead of "intension." In either case, the sentences (1) and (3) are nonextensional. I do not think that there is any compelling reason for avoiding the use of an intensional language for science, because such a language can be completely translated into an extensional one, as I shall show elsewhere.) If suitable postulates and rules for the three concepts

are laid down, (2) can presumably be inferred from (1) and (3) (either deductively or inductively), and (1) from (2) and (3). Since *T* refers only to sentences, pragmatics needs a concept of intension primarily for sentences. But the concept of intension for other types of designators is essential too. In any language, the intension of a compound sentence is a function of the intensions of its parts. It is only due to this fact that a user of a language is able to understand an unlimited number of sentences on the basis of his understanding of a limited number of words or basic phrases.

Pragmatics needs in addition one or two concepts of *utterance*. Let

(4) $A(X,t,S,L)$

mean that *X* at *t* wills deliberately to utter a token of *S* as a sentence of the language *L* in the sense of an *assertion.* Since the concept *A* involves purpose or intention, it is clearly a theoretical construct. The following concept, on the other hand, belongs to the observation language. Let

(5) $U(X,t,R)$

mean that *X* at *t* produces with his speaking organs a series of audible sounds *R*. Suppose that *R* is a token of *S*:

(6) $U(X,t,S)$.

This sentence contains no reference to *L*. The fact that the sounds *S* are meant by *X* as a sentence of *L* is not directly observed, but can at best be inferred inductively. The rules of correspondence may supply a connection between *A* and *U*. Suppose that (6) is established as a result of observations, and that suitable auxiliary premises are given which state the "normality" of the situation and previously confirmed facts about *X* including (3). Then it may be possible to infer inductively first (4), then (2), and finally (1).

It seems to me that a system of theoretical pragmatics is urgently needed, not only for psychology and linguistics, but also for analytic philosophy. Since pure semantics is sufficiently developed, the time seems ripe for attempts at constructing tentative outlines of pragmatical systems. Such an outline may first be restricted to a small group of concepts (e.g., those of belief, assertion, and utterance); it may then be developed to include all those concepts needed for discussions in the theory of knowledge and the methodology of science.

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NOTES

[1] *Philosophical Studies*, 6:33-47 (April 1955).

[2] See above, p. 91.