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Conceptual engineering, speaker-meaning and philosophy

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Conceptual Engineering, Speaker-Meaning and Philosophy

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Abstract. We sometimes seek to change and improve our conceptual repertoire in some way. This is called 'conceptual engineering'. In recent work, I have defended the 'Speaker-Meaning Picture' of conceptual engineering. Independently, while critiquing the conceptual engineering literature, Max Deutsch has argued against understanding conceptual engineering in terms of speaker-meaning. Deutsch's critique targets what he calls the 'standard account' of conceptual engineering and its role in philosophy. In my contribution to this symposium, I also object to the 'standard account'. I then sketch a more moderate view, centred on the Speaker-Meaning Picture, arguing that it avoids Deutsch's criticisms. I then discuss a new objection to the Speaker-Meaning Picture, raised by Deutsch in this symposium: that it trivialises conceptual engineering methodology.

Key words. Conceptual engineering. Speaker-meaning. Deutsch. Trivialisation. Methodology.

1. Conceptual Engineering and Speaker-Meaning

We sometimes seek to change and improve our conceptual repertoire in some way. We might seek to eliminate a concept, revise or replace it, or introduce a brand new one. When we undertake such projects, we engage in *conceptual engineering*.

In recent work, I have defended the *Speaker-Meaning Picture* of conceptual engineering.[1] According to this picture, most conceptual engineering projects can and should proceed via changes to *speaker-meaning* – to what a speaker means, or intends to convey, when she utters a linguistic expression. The Speaker-Meaning Picture has two central claims. The first states that *S* counts as

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[1] See in particular Pinder 2019a, but also Pinder 2019c.

engaging in conceptual engineering with respect to a term X that semantically-means *m* (or has no semantic-meaning at all) if she:

(i)   makes explicit that she will speaker-mean *m′* by X in local contexts;

(ii)   speaker-means *m′* by X in local contexts; and

(iii)   thereby presents *m′* as a good thing to speaker-mean by X within local and relevantly similar contexts,

for newly-designed definition *m′*. Call that the *speaker-meaning approach* to conceptual engineering. The second claim is that the speaker-meaning approach is a *good* approach to conceptual engineering: it is a relatively easy approach, given that we have significant control over speaker-meaning, but it is powerful enough to support most conceptual engineering projects.

Independently, Max Deutsch has recently argued against understanding conceptual engineering in terms of speaker-meaning.

> Perhaps Haslanger has changed what she and some of her readers speaker-mean by 'woman' […]. But this seems like a rather trivial and easy thing to do. Surely it is not the sort of thing the exciting terminology "conceptual engineering" was designed to describe. (Deutsch 2020: 7)

More generally, Deutsch argues that, depending on how one conceives of conceptual engineering, it is either trivial, unachievable, or already commonplace.

> [E]ither we are ignorant of how conceptual engineering can be implemented, or it is straightforward to implement, but deeply uninteresting, involving no new technique, and ill-suited to solving, or even making genuine progress on, any philosophical problem. (p. 2)

Deutsch's critique targets what he calls the 'standard account' of conceptual engineering and its role in philosophy. After summarising the critique (§2), I object to the 'standard account' and sketch a more moderate view, centred on the Speaker-Meaning Picture (§3). The latter, I argue, avoids Deutsch's criticisms (§4). I then turn (§5) to consider an objection to the Speaker-Meaning Picture,

raised by Deutsch in his contribution to this symposium: that it trivialises conceptual engineering methodology.

2. Deutsch's Critique

Deutsch starts with the assumption that concepts are closely related to meanings (2020: 4), so that one 'engineers a concepts' by interacting in some way with a semantic-meaning or speaker-meaning. He then considers three ways of understanding what conceptual engineering is, criticising each in turn.

On the first understanding, conceptual engineering is the stipulation of a change in meaning, so that conceptual engineers are promoting *stipulative revision* as an important, new method of philosophy. Deutsch raises a dilemma for this view (pp. 5–10). If the meanings in question are semantic-meanings, then conceptual engineering faces an *implementation problem*:

> on any view according to which more is required for the determination of semantic meaning
> […] than speakers' intentions to *use* the term in a stipulated sense, there will remain the
> question: What more must […] be done in order for a semantic shift to actually be
> implemented? Not only do conceptual engineers rarely offer any answer to this question, a
> case can be made that *there is no plausible answer to it*: we are, all of us, simply ignorant of
> the precise mechanisms of semantic change. (pp. 19–20)

In contrast, if the meanings in question are speaker-meanings, then conceptual engineering is trivial, and no advance on any other philosophical method.

> [M]aybe Haslanger and her followers now speaker-refer only to subordinated people with
> their uses of 'woman'. But, given that one can speaker-refer to pretty much anything with
> one's uses of 'woman', it is unclear why this should be regarded as any sort of advance.
> (pp. 9–10)

Thus, either way, stipulative revision is not an important new method of philosophy.

The second understanding is that conceptual engineering is the stipulation of meanings for newly introduced terms (in the sense of new syntax), so that conceptual engineers are promoting

stipulative introduction as an important new method of philosophy. Drawing on work by Jennifer Nado (2019), Deutsch argues that stipulative introduction faces no comparable implementation problem.

> At one point […], Nado herself "generates a new concept", writing "I hereby stipulate that a 'brollop' is a desk chair with five legs" [Nado 2019: 19]. As she goes on to point out, once 'brollop' is introduced in this way, one can "generate truths" at will: "brollops are chairs", for example. This appears to show that there are cases in which one *can* successfully determine the semantics of a term by a simple act of stipulation. (Deutsch 2020: 10)

Deutsch has no objection to stipulative introduction as such. His objection is that stipulative introduction

> is certainly not some new, particularly fertile method of philosophizing, one that might supplement or supplant philosophical conceptual analysis. […] [M]ost of its value derives from *syntactic convenience*: via stipulative introduction, we can replace longer descriptions ('desk chair with five legs') with a shorter, single term ('brollop'). (p. 11)

This is not to undervalue stipulative introduction. As Deutsch emphasises, stipulative introduction is the standard method by which technical vocabulary is introduced, and the introduction of technical vocabulary is important in philosophy and elsewhere. 'But did philosophers really need to be told any of this? […] [I]t is obvious that the answer […] is "no"' (p. 12).

The final understanding is that conceptual engineering is the stipulation of additional meanings for extant terms, so that conceptual engineers are promoting *stipulative addition* as an important, new method of philosophy. Deutsch offers Carnapian explication as an example:

> Carnap suggests that 'fish', for example, has been explicated to mean *piscis*, where 'piscis' is stipulated to have a more "exact" definition as 'cold-blooded aquatic vertebrate' (Carnap 1950: 5–6). One understanding of this example, perhaps Carnap's own, is that 'fish' retains its "prescientific" meaning and extension, according to which whales allegedly count as fish, it is just that it is given, by stipulation, an additional meaning, a "scientific" one according to which whales are excluded. The picture is that 'fish' is now, post-explication, ambiguous: in

some contexts (fish market?) its extension includes whales, in others (marine biologist's lab?) not. (Deutsch 2020: 13–14)

Deutsch's discussion of stipulative addition parallels that of stipulative introduction: 'there is only a superficial difference between stipulative addition and stipulative introduction' (p. 14). He accepts that we can stipulate additional semantic-meanings for old terms, that the process has an important role to play in philosophy and elsewhere, but claims that it is 'common practice already' (p. 15).

So, according to Deutsch, whether understood as stipulative revision, stipulative introduction or stipulative addition, conceptual engineering is not an important new method of philosophy.

In closing, Deutsch briefly raises one final objection, concerning the rationale for conceptual engineering 'as a remedy for "conceptual defects"' (p. 21).

> This account of the value of conceptual engineering clearly depends on the view that many of our terms, including many of our philosophical terms, such as 'knowledge', 'free action', and 'woman', are semantically defective. *Are* these terms semantically defective? Not if their purpose is to allow us to speak of, and communicate about, things like knowledge, free action, and women. (*ibid.*)

Thus, Deutsch writes that 'the usual rationale for engaging in conceptual engineering is a bad rationale' (*ibid.*): there is no need to try to improve such terms or their meanings.

3.   Conceptual Engineering in Philosophy

Deutsch's criticisms target what he calls the 'standard account' of conceptual engineering and its role in philosophy (2020: §2). According to that account, concepts of philosophical interest tend to be defective, and so philosophical problems ought not to be tackled via conceptual analysis; instead, philosophers should start tackling philosophical problems by improving the defective concepts. On this account, conceptual engineering is interesting insofar as both: it is an effective new methodology for solving philosophical problems; and we can make sense of concepts being defective. Against this backdrop, Deutsch's criticisms may seem broadly compelling.

Whether or not Deutsch is right to call the account 'standard', it is not a helpful picture of conceptual engineering in philosophy. Firstly, as Simion and Kelp (2019) have argued, conceptual engineering should not be thought of as limited to 'fixing defective concepts'. Rather, we should think of conceptual engineering as aiming to improve upon our concepts relative to certain purposes. Even if 'woman' is not semantically defective, using a revisionary definition for the term might be helpful for certain purposes – such as theorising about gender, or promoting gender equality.

Here is a second reason that the 'standard account' is not a helpful picture of conceptual engineering in philosophy. There is already a widespread form of conceptual engineering, namely the introduction and refinement of technical vocabulary, which plays an important role both inside and outside of philosophy.[2] But, as illustrated by Deutsch's criticisms, this form of conceptual engineering sits awkwardly with the 'standard picture'. Firstly, the introduction and refinement of technical vocabulary seems methodologically trivial. And, secondly, it seems totally ill-suited to solving philosophical problems. To be taken seriously, an account of conceptual engineering and its role in philosophy should *start* with these admissions – otherwise, like the 'standard account', it merely invites the kinds of criticism raised by Deutsch.

Importantly, the Speaker-Meaning Picture captures the widespread cases well. According to the view, one introduces or refines a technical term by explicitly giving a new definition and locally using the term accordingly. In doing so, one presents the new definition as a good thing to speaker-mean by that term in relevant contexts, typically without implying that the term is otherwise semantically defective. It is a virtue of the picture that these widespread cases come out as seeming methodologically trivial, and seemingly ill-suited to solving philosophical problems.

Nonetheless, there is more to say about the method and its suitability to solving philosophical problems. Firstly, the method includes a normative element: the conceptual engineer presents her new definition as a good thing to speaker-mean by the term in relevant contexts. This immediately gives rise to various important questions. In virtue of what is a definition a good thing to speaker-mean by a term? Are moral and political factors relevant? What about carving nature at its joints? When is

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[2] See, for example, Chalmers 2019.

something other than a term's semantic-meaning a good thing to speaker-mean by that term? And so on. These are substantive normative questions that, as conceptual engineering is important in philosophy and elsewhere, deserve serious attention.

Secondly, there is another sense in which the speaker-meaning approach is not methodologically trivial: depending on the scope of the project, the speaker-meaning approach can be difficult to carry out. Compare, on the one hand, introducing a technical term for some particular purpose while writing an article and, on the other, Haslanger's (2000) proposal that everyone make use of her ameliorated gender and race concepts. The former, *narrow scope* project is reasonably easy to carry out successfully: a careful author can articulate a definition suitable for her purposes, and a careful reader can interpret her accordingly. The latter, *wide scope* project is far harder to carry out successfully: it is not easy to convince others to adopt new definitions, especially of familiar terms.

Some will here object that ameliorative projects are best construed as aiming to change the *semantic*-meaning of relevant terms – that Haslanger (2000) aims to change the *semantic*-meaning of gender and race terms.[3] The objector will conclude that the speaker-meaning approach is not well suited to undertaking such projects. However, as it stands, this is not a convincing objection. Let us suppose that Haslanger succeeds in getting everyone to speaker-mean her definitions of gender and race terms by default. People would continue to use the terms to communicate successfully, cementing the new default usage. Eventually, the new definitions would be encoded in dictionaries and taught in schools. And these long-term changes would cause shifts in how people think about gender and race, ultimately affecting people's behaviour (for the better, hopefully). If such eventualities obtained, Haslanger would surely deem her project a success. To push the present objection against the speaker-meaning approach, one would need to articulate: what semantic-meaning is; why the above eventualities would not suffice to cause changes in semantic-meaning;[4]

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[3] Although Deutsch will not be among them. See Deutsch 2020: §7, forthcoming: §3.

[4] Cf. Pinder 2018: 14f.

and why Haslanger (or, indeed, anyone) should care about something so utterly disconnected from social convention, behaviour and the use of language.[5] This would not be an easy task.

Thirdly, the speaker-meaning approach can also be used to tackle more traditional philosophical problems. For concreteness, suppose that you plan to use conceptual engineering to tackle the epistemological problem of radical scepticism. Here are two strategies for doing so.

A Conservative Strategy. Provide a set of technical definitions for (new or old) epistemological terms, and argue that those definitions are particularly good things to speaker-mean by those terms for the purpose of articulating and explaining epistemological phenomena. Demonstrate that a problem parallel to that of radical scepticism does not arise in this framework. Relate this result back to our ordinary concepts of KNOWLEDGE, JUSTIFICATION, etc., to obtain substantive insight into the original problem of radical scepticism.

A Radical Strategy. Provide a set of technical definitions for (new or old) epistemological terms, and argue that those definitions are particularly good things to speaker-mean by those terms for the purpose of articulating and explaining epistemological phenomena. Articulate the problem of radical scepticism within the new terminological framework, arguing that the result is a better way to understand the original problem. Show that, within the new terminological framework, the articulated problem of radical scepticism has a solution.

These broad strategies for using conceptual engineering to solve philosophical problems have been developed and defended elsewhere, so I will not do so here.[6] The present point is that they remain viable strategies on the Speaker-Meaning Picture.

Finally, in contrast to the 'standard account', there is no claim here that philosophers *ought* to start using conceptual engineering to tackle philosophical problems – the problem of radical

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[5] Cf. Riggs 2019.

[6] Conservative strategies are defended in, e.g., Maher 2007, Pinder 2019c, 2020, Scharp 2013, and Schupbach 2017. Radical strategies are defended in, e.g., Carnap 1963, Pinder 2017b, 2020, and Simion and Kelp 2019.

scepticism or otherwise. The present view is more moderate. There are coherent strategies for tackling philosophical problems that place conceptual engineering at centre stage, and which are worth exploring. Of course, using conceptual engineering in this way *might* turn out to be a dead end. But there would be insight to be gained even from failure. So it is reasonable for interested philosophers to pursue these strategies.

Let me summarise. On the Speaker-Meaning Picture, conceptual engineering is a long-standing method, typically used when working with technical terms. But there is value in ongoing discussions: there are important foundational, largely normative questions to ask *about* conceptual engineering; and it is worth exploring whether conceptual engineering can play a more substantive role in philosophy than previously realised.

4. Stipulative Revision, Introduction and Addition

Against the Speaker-Meaning Picture, Deutsch's principal criticisms do not take hold. Here, I focus just on stipulative revision and stipulative introduction – what I say about the latter applies mutatis mutandis to stipulative addition.

Firstly, consider stipulative revision, the stipulation of a change in meaning. Recall that Deutsch raises a dilemma: understood in terms of semantic-meaning, it faces an implementation problem; understood in terms of speaker-meaning, it is no advance.

I accept that stipulative revision can count as a form of conceptual engineering, and recommend implementing cases thereof via speaker-meaning. So construed, stipulative revision involves stipulating a new speaker-meaning for a term to replace any extant meanings for that term. I thus face the second horn of Deutsch's dilemma. Deutsch illustrates the objection by appeal to Haslanger: even if she and her followers now speaker-mean such-and-such by 'woman', that is not a philosophical advance. In one sense, I agree: several people using a term in a non-standard way is not an advance as such. But there is much more to the story. For example, Haslanger argued that her definition was a better thing to speaker-mean by 'woman' than its semantic-meaning (2000: 45–48), in part because doing so would lead us 'to understand ourselves and those around us as deeply molded

by injustice' (p. 48). That line of argument was a significant advance. And, if she manages to persuade people more generally to adopt her definition, that will also be an advance – assuming, at least, that activism can count as philosophy. These advances make sense from within the Speaker-Meaning Picture.

Note that, on the Speaker-Meaning Picture, Haslanger's project still faces a kind of implementation problem: convincing a population to adopt a given definition for a term is difficult. But this version of the problem is not as serious as that raised by Deutsch. Recall that Deutsch poses a question:

> on any view according to which more is required for the determination of semantic meaning […] than speakers' intentions to *use* the term in a stipulated sense, there will remain the question: What more must […] be done in order for a semantic shift to actually be implemented?

According to Deutsch, the underlying problem is that there is no plausible answer to that question. However, no parallel question even arises on the Speaker-Meaning Picture, because speaker-meaning *is* determined by speakers' intentions to use terms. The challenge is to co-ordinate speakers' intentions. There is no additional requirement to implement a semantic shift.

Secondly, consider stipulative introduction, the stipulation of a meaning for new syntax. Deutsch and I both accept that meanings can be trivially stipulated for new syntax, as illustrated by Nado's introduction of 'brollop'. Deutsch's objection is that stipulative introduction is neither new, nor appropriate for tackling philosophical problems. Drawing together my comments in §3, my principal response is threefold: I agree that stipulative introduction isn't new; it is nonetheless worth exploring whether (via a conservative or radical strategy) it could play a serious role in tackling philosophical problems; and, even if not, other forms of conceptual engineering (such as stipulative revision) might nonetheless be able to play such a role in Haslanger-style ameliorative projects.

There is an additional point of disagreement to flag. Deutsch accepts that, in stipulative introductions, one trivially stipulates *semantic*-meanings. This is surprising. Firstly, on most metasemantic theories, it takes more than a *mere* stipulation to fix a semantic-meaning. And,

secondly, the view seems to be in tension with Deutsch's claim there is no plausible story about how we can shift semantic-meanings. If semantic-meanings can be fixed by intentional stipulation, then it is reasonable to expect a plausible route from shifting intentions to shifting semantic-meanings. Regardless, we make better sense of stipulative introductions in terms of *speaker*-meaning. Nado certainly made explicit what she would speaker-mean by 'brollop'. And so, in writing 'brollops are chairs', her readers can interpret her as speaker-meaning the banal truth that five-legged-desk-chairs are chairs. Unlike Deutsch, I take the apparent triviality of stipulative introductions as a reason to understand them in terms of speaker-meaning.

To summarise: stipulative revision, introduction and addition can all count as forms of conceptual engineering that (*pace* Deutsch) sit well with the Speaker-Meaning Picture; and, while (as Deutsch notes) those methods are not all new, it is nonetheless the case that conceptual engineers have (and plan to) put those methods to use in novel ways, developing new lines of argument and new strategies for tackling philosophical problems.

5.   On Deutsch's Contribution to this Symposium

In his contribution to the present symposium, Deutsch argues that the Speaker-Meaning Picture 'appears to trivialize conceptual engineering, making the method ineffective for solving philosophical problems' (forthcoming: §2).

His discussion centres around an example of Nado's (2019, §2), in which a conceptual engineer proposes using 'free will' to express *being an H_2O molecule*. Deutsch writes:

> nothing stands in the way of Nado's hypothetical conceptual engineer *using* 'possesses free will' to mean—speaker-mean—*is an H_2O molecule*. And it is precisely because nothing stands in the way of this that it seems pointless and ineffective when it comes to solving any philosophical problem about free will. It won't, for example, shed any light on what free will is, or whether any of us possess free will […]. (Deutsch forthcoming: §1)

Now, I agree that this project, so construed, would be pointless and ineffective. But this is no objection to the Speaker-Meaning Picture. According to the Picture, the speaker-meaning approach is

a good approach to conceptual engineering. If you are trying to change the semantic-meaning of 'woman' from m to m', the Picture suggests you try to change what people speaker-mean by 'woman' from m to m' instead.[7] Mutatis mutandis in the present case. If a conceptual engineer is sufficiently confused to believe that she can make philosophical progress by locally changing the semantic-meaning of 'free will' to H_2O molecule, then the Speaker-Meaning Picture suggests that she speaker-mean H_2O molecule by 'free will' instead. Such a project would of course be ridiculous. But the objection should be to the confused conceptual engineer, not the Speaker-Meaning Picture.

To test the prospects of the Speaker-Meaning Picture, it is necessary to look at a more serious conceptual engineering project. I sketched some strategies for using the speaker-meaning approach to tackle philosophical problems in §3. Let me now give a more concrete example, from Pinder 2019c, in which I argue that Scharp (2013, 2019) should construe his conceptual engineering project in terms of speaker-meaning. Let 'Kevin' denote a fictional philosopher who adopted the approach.

Kevin wanted to solve the liar paradox. First, he argued that the paradox arises because the semantic-meaning of 'true' is (in a technical sense) inconsistent. Reflecting on this diagnosis, he argued that (a) the best strategy for solving the paradox was to perform a semantic analysis of the liar sentence, and (b) 'true' should not be afforded its usual role in truth-conditional semantics. Over several years, Kevin painstakingly engineered two new, interrelated definitions, eventually stipulating that he would speaker-mean those definitions by 'ascending true' and 'descending true'. Kevin briefly argued that those were good terms to use (due to the instances of the T-schema that the definitions preserved), and argued at length that the definitions were good things to speaker-mean in general by showing that they could play the central role in a new variant of truth-conditional semantics. Using this new approach to semantics, Kevin has carefully analysed the liar sentence, thereby developing an innovative solution to the liar paradox.

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[7] The view is not that every instance of the speaker-meaning approach is a good instance of conceptual engineering.

In this example, Kevin is engaged in a substantive philosophical project. It is substantive in virtue of the fact that he has developed a new approach to semantics capable of handling liar sentences. His conceptual engineering subproject, constructing definitions for 'ascending true' and 'descending true', plays an essential role within the overarching project. The banal point that Kevin could have speaker-meant *sweater tossed lazily on the floor* by 'ascending true' and *partially buttered toast* by 'descending true' is, *pace* Deutsch, irrelevant. What stopped Kevin from speaker-meaning those things was his common-sense, combined with a desire to solve the liar paradox. And whether or not you think Kevin (or Scharp) was successful, his approach is certainly innovative, insightful and worth taking seriously.

The general point is this. Some actual conceptual engineering projects have had philosophical value: Scharp on truth, Haslanger (on some construals) on gender and race, Manne on misogyny, Gendler's introduction of 'alief', Block on consciousness, Kripke's introduction of 'rigid designator', Tarski on truth, Frege on the logical connectives, and so on.[8] Such projects have philosophical value because the introduced or revised definitions have been carefully constructed to do philosophical work: they highlight new ideas, reveal new distinctions, give us new ways of thinking about old topics, give us enhanced precision, and so on. The ease or difficulty with which a proposal is implemented is irrelevant to its philosophical value; it is the definitions that matter, not whether they are speaker-meant or semantically-meant.

Can we distinguish between the good definitions, the ones with philosophical value, and the bad ones? In Pinder 2019a, I mentioned some of the factors that might be relevant, in any given case, to whether a definition is a good thing to speaker-mean by a term:

> what makes *m′* a good or bad thing to speaker-mean by X? […] Perhaps speaker-meaning *m′*
> would change the subject from something we care about; perhaps it would lead to greater
> social equality; perhaps it would be a more precise way to talk about whatever X
> semantically-means; perhaps it would allow us to carve nature at its joints, or prevent us from

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[8] See Scharp 2013, Haslanger 2000, Manne 2017, Gendler 2008, Block 1995, Kripke 1980, Tarski 1933/1983, Frege 1879/1967.

doing so; perhaps it would facilitate, or hinder, giving explanations of key phenomena; and so on. (Pinder 2019a: 20) [9]

How such factors are weighted will depend on different features of the context at hand: the motivations of the conceptual engineer, the overarching goal, how others will be affected, and so on. One likely result is that whether m' is a good thing to speaker-mean by X will be context dependent. Perhaps, for example, the definition *person subordinated due to perceived femaleness* might be a good thing to speaker-mean by 'woman' when pursuing social equality, but a bad thing to speaker-mean by 'woman' when exploring what it is to be a woman. How effective communication is maintained across such contexts is an important question that warrants further exploration.[10]

There is probably no algorithm for determining whether, in some context, m' is a good thing to speaker-mean by X.[11] Rather, this is likely a matter of very difficult judgement. It is an incredibly difficult task to determine which definitions of alethic terms would lead to new insights on the liar paradox, or to determine which definitions of gender terms would lead to greater social equality. As a case in point: my comments above about Scharp notwithstanding, I have elsewhere argued that, given his aims, his definitions are *not* good things to speaker-mean by 'ascending true' and 'descending true'.[12] The argument relies on specific details about how the definitions relate to their intended

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[9] Deutsch (forthcoming: §2) appears to argue that, according to the Speaker-Meaning Picture, *H_2O molecule* is a good thing to speaker-mean by 'free will'. But none of the factors I mention in this quotation support such a conclusion: speaker-meaning *H_2O molecule* by 'free will' would change the subject from something we care about, would not lead to greater social equality, is not a more precise way of talking about free will, would not have implications for our ability to carve nature at its joints one way or the other (as we are already able to do this with 'H_2O molecule'), would hinder giving explanations of free will, and would not facilitate explanations about H_2O molecules (since we already have a better term for the job, namely 'H_2O molecule').

[10] Deutsch and I are in agreement on this point, although he would not express it so serenely. I do not think of this question as pressing for the Speaker-Meaning Picture in particular, as I take its import to be quite general.

[11] Cf. Pinder 2017a: 454.

[12] See Pinder 2019b: §6.

theoretical roles, details which were not obvious, or even expected, in advance. These are not issues that can be settled in an afternoon.

None of these points constitute objections to the Speaker-Meaning Picture. The speaker-meaning approach provides a clear, comparatively easy route to implementation. But implementation is not philosophical problem solving. And no one should be under the illusion that conceptual engineering, on the Speaker-Meaning Picture or otherwise, will lead to easy solutions to philosophical problems. Philosophical insight does not come cheap.

The point carries over to questions of social equality. Consider an objection raised by Deutsch:

> What is entirely *unclear*, however, is how or why anyone should think that, simply by adopting some or another speaker-meaning policy relative to some term, one is thereby engaging in an activity that might lead to greater social equality. In fact, on the face of it, it seems faintly ridiculous to think that it could. (Deutsch forthcoming: §2)

This objection is plausible while imagining someone pulling a speaker-meaning policy out of thin air. But, nevertheless, it is perfectly reasonable to think that social equality was/is increased by encouraging people across society to use 'woman' to include transwomen, or to apply 'marriage' to same-sex couples, or to use 'misogyny' to pick out most hostile and noxious facets of gender-based oppression, or to use 'disability' in a value-neutral way, and so on. Introducing people to new, socially progressive definitions for everyday terms, and encouraging them to use those definitions in everyday contexts, can shift how people think about and act towards themselves, others and society. It would be extremely surprising to discover that this could *not* lead to greater social equality.

But this does not imply that, on the Speaker-Meaning Picture, social equality comes easily. When I first read Kate Manne's (2017) discussion of 'misogyny' and 'sexism', it gave me a new and insightful way of thinking about a wide range of phenomena relating to gender-based oppression. Manne carefully develops two definitions, which interplay with the connotations carried by 'misogyny' and 'sexism' in just the right way to yield an improved understanding of gender-based oppression. I can now have more nuanced thoughts than I could before, by intentionally and

sometimes explicitly deferring to those definitions when I use 'misogyny' and 'sexism', whether on the page, in conversation, or in thought. This has had a material effect on what I see as, and how I react to, certain kinds of gender-based oppression. In my local sphere, then, I believe that it has enhanced gender equality, at least to some degree. But these comments are compatible with understanding Manne's project in terms of speaker-meaning; and, so understood, Manne's project is not 'too easy', nor does it trivialise conceptual engineering methodology.[13]

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