

## On Stephen Neale's manuscript Silent Reference

### *Introduction*

*Dubrovnik conference on the philosophy of language and linguistics which took place September 12 to 16, 2016 at the IUC continued with still growing interest in the “semantics-pragmatics” distinction, this time partly focusing on Stephen Neale's latest manuscript “Silent Reference”. The first four papers are reactions to Neale's work, which will, hopefully, be followed by Neale's replies to his critics in the first issue of the Croatian Journal of Philosophy in 2018.*

*Stephen Schiffer's paper “Gricean Semantics and Vague Speaker-Meaning” argues that presentations of Gricean semantics, including Stephen Neale's in “Silent Reference,” totally ignore vagueness, even though virtually every utterance is vague. Schiffer asks how Gricean semantics might be adjusted to accommodate vague speaker-meaning. His answer is that it can't accommodate it: the Gricean program collapses in the face of vague speaker-meaning. The Gricean might, however, find some solace in knowing that every other extant meta-semantic and semantic program is in the same boat.*

*Daniel W. Harris in his contribution “Speaker Reference and Cognitive Architecture” points out that philosophers of language inspired by Grice have long sought to show how facts about reference boil down to facts about speakers' communicative intentions. He focuses on a recent attempt by Stephen Neale who argues that referring with an expression requires having a special kind of communicative intention—one that involves representing an occurrence of the expression as standing in some particular relation to its referent. Neale raises a problem for this account: because some referring expressions are unpronounced, most language users don't realize they exist, and so seemingly don't have intentions about them. Neale suggests that we might solve this problem by supposing that speakers have nonconscious or “tacit” intentions. Harris argues that this solution can't work by arguing that our representations of unpronounced bits of language all occur within a modular component of the mind, and so we can't have intentions about them. From this line of thought, Harris draws several interesting conclusions*

*In his paper “Saying without Knowing What or How” Elmar Unnsteinsson in response to Stephen Neale, argues that aphonetic expressions, such as PRO, are intentionally uttered by normal speakers of*

*natural language, either by acts of omitting to say something explicitly, or by acts of giving phonetic realization to aphonics. He also argues that Gricean intention-based semantics should seek divorce from Cartesian assumptions of transparent access to propositional attitudes and, consequently, that Stephen Schiffer's so-called meaning-intention problem is not powerful enough to banish alleged cases of over-intellectualization in contemporary philosophy of language and mind.*

Jesse Rappaport in his paper "Is There a Meaning-Intention Problem?" attempts to articulate the assumptions that support the meaning-intention problem. He argues that these assumptions are incompatible with some basic linguistic data. For instance, a speaker could have used a sentence like "The book weighs five pounds" to mean that the book weighs five pounds on Earth, even before anyone knew that weight was a relativized property. The existence of such "extrinsic parameters" undermines the force of the meaning-intention problem. However, since the meaning-intention problem arises naturally from a Gricean view of speaker's meaning and speaker's reference, the failure of the argument raises problems for the Gricean. He also argues that the analysis of referring-with offered by Schiffer, and defended by Neale, is defective.

Two more articles conclude this issue. Erich Rast in his paper "Value Disagreement and Two Aspects of Meaning" discusses two attempts of solving the problem of value disagreement: contextualist, relativist and metalinguistic. Although the metalinguistic account seems to be on the right track, it is argued that it does not sufficiently explain why and how disagreements about the meaning of evaluative terms are based on and can be decided by appeal to existing social practices. As a remedy, it is argued that original suggestions from Putnam's "The Meaning of 'Meaning'" ought to be taken seriously. The resulting dual aspect theory of meaning can explain value disagreement in much the same way as it deals with disagreement about general terms. However, the account goes beyond Putnam's by not just defending a version of social externalism, but also defending the thesis that the truth conditional meaning of many evaluative terms is not fixed by experts either and is instead constantly contested as part of a normal function of language.

Mark Steen in "Temporally Restricted Composition" develops and defends a novel answer to Peter van Inwagen's 'Special Composition Question,' (SCQ) namely, under what conditions do some things compose an object? His answer is that things will compose an object when and only when they exist simultaneously relative to a reference frame (He calls this 'Temporally Restricted Composition' or TREC). He then shows how this view wards off objections given to 'Unrestricted Mereology' (UM). TREC, unlike other theories of Restricted Composition, does not fall prey to worries about vagueness, anthropocentrism, or arbitrariness. TREC also has other advantages.