



**7. But the same words could signify different ideas in different people's minds. For example, a child's conception of 'gold' is different from that of the adults, so the word 'gold' would signify different ideas in the child's speech.**

Q: When a child says 'I love gold', could he mean the same thing as when a woman claims 'I love gold'?

**[Locke's argument]:**

- 1. Without having ideas in the mind, no one can be said to be using a language.**
- 2. The purpose of language is simply to convey one's ideas.**
- 3. Therefore, the proper signification of words one uses must be the ideas in one's mind.**

**§ Locke's criticisms of common assumptions:**

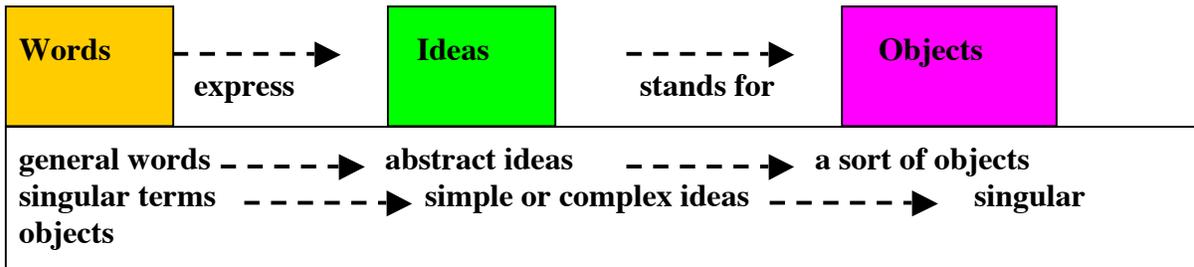
1. Two assumptions people usually make of the words they use:  
\_\_\_ that words they use also stand for the same ideas in others' minds (with whom they communicate) (social environment); and  
\_\_\_ that words they use also stand for the reality of things (physical environment).
2. Both these assumptions are not justified since words can not stand for anything but those ideas we have in our minds.
3. Every man has so inviolable a liberty to make words stand for what ideas he pleases that no one has the power to make others have the same ideas in their minds that he does.
4. It is only through a tacit consent that one agrees to the limits of the signification of one's words.

**[Consent is the basis of language but it does not pose an absolute rule on the speakers concerning the connection between words and ideas.]**

**§ Locke on General Terms**

1. Words become general by being made the signs of general ideas.
2. Ideas become general by the process of abstraction (separation from the circumstances of time and place and other particular properties).
3. There are no general properties which are represented by general ideas (i.e., there are no Forms or Universals).
4. Universals (or Forms) are not real; they are but the inventions of our understanding.

5. We do not have innate ideas which we then apply to things.
6. General ideas signify a sort of things by being a sign of an abstract idea in the mind.
7. A thing falls into one species (one kind) by conforming to the abstract idea.
8. The abstract idea is then the essence of the species(the kind).
9. The essences of the sorts of things, and consequently, the sorting of things, is the workmanship of the understanding that abstracts and makes those general ideas.



**§ Summary of Locke's Theory [The Ideational Theory of Meaning] (by Keith Donnellan)**

**I. [Thesis of the ideational theory of meaning]**

**\_\_\_ What gives our sounds and scribbles meaning, in contrast to the sounds a parrot can make, is that ours are associated with ideas in our minds.**

**II. "ideas" = concepts**

- A) Ideas are in the mind and accessible and open to the person who has them.**
- B) Ideas form the building blocks of thoughts.**
- C) They allow a person to categorize and classify his or her experience by supplying the necessary and sufficient conditions for being of a certain kind.**
- D) They supply the meaning of words and phrases by supplying the necessary and sufficient conditions for applying the word or phrase.**
- E) A necessary condition for successful communication is the arousal of the same idea in the hearer which lie behind the words and phrases of the speaker.**

**III. Thoughts**

**Ideas are associated with words or phrases; sentences can be said to be associated with thoughts. Just as sentences are made up of words, thoughts are made up of ideas.**

**\_\_\_ The meaningful sounds and scribbles mirror our internal mental processes of thought.**

#### **IV. Simple and Complex Ideas:**

##### **Simple ideas:**

**\_\_\_ One cannot "invent" a simple idea; one can only get it by experience.**

**\_\_\_ One cannot understand a simple word unless one can associate the simple idea with this word.**

**e.g. my idea of red is a simple idea, without any separate component ideas at all.**

##### **Complex ideas:**

**\_\_\_ Ultimately all complex ideas decompose into simple ideas.**

**\_\_\_ One could construct the complex idea oneself out of simple ideas already in the mind.**

**A). Words which stand for complex ideas are definable using the classical form of definition. (e.g. "bachelor" = df. "person & male & unmarried")**

**B). Words which stand for simple ideas, on the other hand, will be undefinable.**

**C). Therefore, one can teach another person the meaning of a word he does not understand by supplying a definition as long as (1) the word stands for a complex idea and (2) the person already associated the right ideas with the words in the definition. (If a word stands for a simple idea, its meaning cannot be conveyed by a definition. Thus, you cannot convey the meaning of 'red' to someone born blind.)**

**D). Communication means that the speaker causes, by using the words, the same ideas the speaker has in mind to arise in the mind of the hearer.**

**=> The speaker associates certain sounds with certain ideas. If everything goes correctly, these are the very sounds which the hearer also associated with those same ideas. Upon hearing the sounds the hearer brings up the same ideas.**

## David Lewis: Languages and Language

**Q: What is language? And what is the function of language?**

**[Thesis]:**

**\_\_\_ Language is about meanings and truth-values. The meaning and the truth-value of a single sentence is determined by rules of the whole language in conjunction with the factual information about the world.**

1. Language is a relation between the language and the world.
2. Language is about truth, and truth is related to states of the world.
3. Each sentence has a truth value (is either true or false) in the domain of a whole language, in relation to the world.

$\mathfrak{f}(\sigma) [W_1] = T$  (George W. Bush is the current President of the U.S.) in our world.)

$\mathfrak{f}(\sigma) [W_2] = T$  (George W. Bush is the current President of the U.S.) in another world.)

$\mathfrak{f}(\sigma) [W_3] = F$  (George W. Bush is the current President of the U.S.) in a world where John Kerry won the election.)

**→ Realism**

**[Antithesis]:**

**\_\_\_ Language is a social phenomenon. It is used among rational people who wish to communicate their beliefs and desires, and sometimes, to achieve some intended goals (such as getting the listener to comply). Hence, language is a form of rational, convention-governed human social activity. These conventions could be quite arbitrary, but they are perpetuated by the implicit agreement of everyone in the language community.**

1. Language is a social phenomenon which is part of the natural history of human beings; a sphere of human action, wherein people utter strings of vocal sounds, or inscribe strings of marks, and wherein people respond by thought or action to the sounds or marks which they observe to have been so produced.
2. Language is primarily not about truth, but about human rationality and human communication.
3. Language is generated by humans' desires and beliefs. The speaker wishes to accomplish some goals by uttering the sentence. The hearer knows how the production of sounds or marks depends upon the producer's state of mind.
4. Hence, language is a communication tool between two (or more) rational agents.
5. Linguistic rules and conventions are established on the basis of human rationality and mutual expectation of rule-following.
6. Within any suitable population, various regularities can be found in this rational verbal activity. Some of these regularities are accidental. Others can be explained, and different ones can be explained in very different ways.
7. Language does not guarantee truth or correspondence to the world.

➔ **Anti-realism**

**[Synthesis]: (Lewis' proposal)**

\_\_\_ Language is a rational, convention-governed social activity. Such conventions are built upon truthfulness and trust in the language itself by its users. We have coordination between truthful speaker and trusting hearers. Each conforms as he does to the prevailing regularity of truthfulness and trust in  $\mathcal{L}$  because he expects complementary conformity on the part of the other.

\_\_\_ Under this view, a string of types of sounds or marks can bear a meaning and truth-value *only* relative to a language, or relative to a population  $P$ .

1. What is the connection between what I have called *languages*, functions from strings of sounds or of marks to sets of possible worlds, semantic systems discussed in complete abstraction from human affairs, and what I have called *language*, a form of rational, convention-governed human social activity?
2. My proposal is that the convention whereby a population  $P$  uses a language  $\mathcal{L}$  is a convention of *truthfulness* and *trust* in  $\mathcal{L}$ .
3. To be truthful in  $\mathcal{L}$  is to try never to utter any sentence of  $\mathcal{L}$  that are not true in  $\mathcal{L}$ . Thus it is to avoid uttering any sentence of  $\mathcal{L}$  unless one believes it to be true in  $\mathcal{L}$ .
4. To be trusting in  $\mathcal{L}$  is to form beliefs in a certain way: to impute truthfulness in  $\mathcal{L}$  to others, and thus to tend to respond to another's utterance of any sentence of  $\mathcal{L}$  by coming to believe that the uttered sentence is true in  $\mathcal{L}$ .

**Q1: What happens when half of the population routinely lie? What happens when people exaggerate, use hidden meanings, use puffery, use flattery, etc.?**

**Q2: How do we communicate our implication or hidden meaning?**

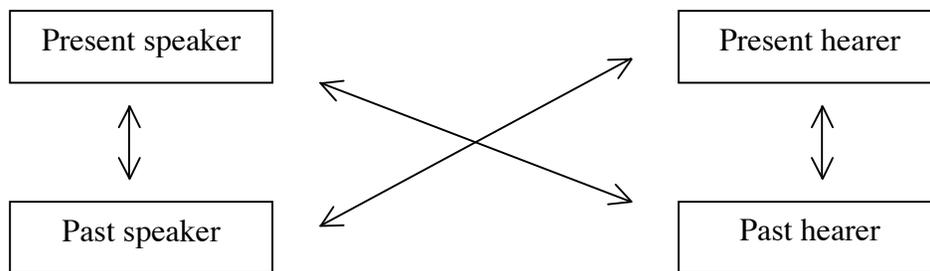
**Q3: What is the foundation for the truthfulness in our communication if we are most often wrong in our beliefs even though we meant to be truthful? How can trust be established on such a basis?**

**§ What Is A Convention?**

A regularity  $R$ , in action or in action and belief, is a *convention* in a population  $P$  iff, within  $P$ , the following six conditions hold. (A few exceptions to the "everyone" can be tolerated.)

- (1) Everyone conforms to  $R$ .
- (2) Everyone believes that the others conform to  $R$ .
- (3) This belief that others conform to  $R$  gives everyone a good and decisive reason to conform to  $R$  himself.

- (4) There is a general preference for general conformity to  $R$  rather than slightly-less-than-general conformity – in particular, rather than conformity by all but any one. (This is not to deny that some state of *widespread* nonconformity to  $R$  might be even more preferred.) .... Thus everyone who believes that at least almost everyone conforms to  $R$  will want the others, as well as himself, to conform.
- (5)  $R$  is not the only possible regularity meeting the last two conditions. There is at least one alternative  $R'$  such that the belief that the others conformed to  $R'$  would give everyone a good and decisive practical or epistemic reason to conform to  $R'$  likewise; such that there is a general preference for general conformity to  $R'$  rather than slightly-less-than-general conformity to  $R'$ ; and such that there is normally no way of conforming to  $R$  and  $R'$  both. Thus the alternative  $R'$  could have perpetuated itself as a convention instead of  $R$ ; this condition provides for the characteristic arbitrariness of conventions.
- (6) The various facts listed in conditions (1) to (5) are matters of *common* (or *mutual*) knowledge: they are known to everyone, it is known to everyone that they are known to everyone, and so on. The knowledge mentioned here may be merely potential: knowledge that would be available if one bothered to think hard enough. .... This condition ensures stability.



### § The Role of Conventions in Language

1. Conventions are regularities in action, or in action and belief, which are arbitrary but perpetuate themselves because they serve some sort of common interest. Past conformity breeds future conformity because it gives one a reason to go on conforming; but there is some alternative regularity which could have served instead, and would have perpetuated itself in the same way if only it had got started.
2. If we look for the fundamental difference in verbal behavior between members of two linguistic communities, we can be sure of finding something which is arbitrary but perpetuates itself because of a common interest in coordination.

**Q: What practices are conventions in our society? What practices are not mere conventions? What is their difference?**

**\* [Summary]: What is a convention?**

1. A convention is a regularity in action or in action and belief.
2. A convention is not promulgated by any authority. It is not enforced by means of sanctions except to the extent that, because one has some sort of reason to conform, something bad may happen if one does not. In other words, a convention is sustained by a special kind of system of belief and desires.
3. A convention is nowhere codified, nor laid down as a set of rules.
4. A convention governs social behavior through each member's tacit consent and underlying expectation that others will all conform.
5. A convention persists because everyone has reason to conform if others do.
6. A convention is so-called because of the way it persists, not because of the way it originated. A convention *need not* originate by convention – that is, by agreement – though many conventions do originate by agreement.

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**Focus Questions for Essay #2: [Answer both – write about 1 ½ page for each author]**

- (1) **Cook: What is Cook's interpretation of Wittgenstein's view on the possibility of private language? What kind of argument has he put forward for Wittgenstein? (For discussion: What do *you* think is being communicated – what information is being passed on – when one person says 'I have a migraine headache'?)**
- (2) **Kripke: What is the skeptic paradox? How does Kripke present a Wittgensteinian solution to the paradox?**