(1) Most of the theories of meaning we've talked about so far have been entity-theories, that is theories which assign meaning-objects — like propositions, intensions, or verification conditions — to sentences. Today, we will be discussing use-theories of meaning, which arose in direct opposition to the idea of meaning-entities.

(2) **(a)** First, I will be discussing the later Wittgensteins ideas about explain language in terms of its use. I should mentiond that its usually a good idea to describe ideas or theories as Wittgenstinian rather than ascribing them to him, since he didn't want to be associated with philosophical theories. But the ideas I'm going to describe have a clear origin in his work.

(b) Afterwards, we will talk about Wilfrid Sellars' *inferentialism* about meaning which developed around the same time.

(c) Finally, I will give a brief overview of Robert Brandom's contemporary infeerentialism, which is a further development of both Sellars' and Wittgenstein's ideas.

(3) The idea at the core of all use-theories is that we ought to explain linguistic meaning as patterns or rules. Language is, first and foremost, something which we use for social interaction and utterances are something which we use to do something. We've already seen parts of this idea in Strawson's criticism of Russell. Strawson is indeed part of the Oxford tradition of *ordinary language philosophy* which is also represented by J.L. Austin, Gilbert Ryle, and sometimes H.P. Grice. But since these thinkers are generally more interested in more specific ways we use language rather than meaning in itself, we'll return to them next lecture.

(4) Many, maybe most, of our linguistic interactions aren't just a matter of trying to give a description of some way the world is. We greet, thank, prompt, ask, and do many other things, but none of those kinds of utterances seem to correspond to any meaning-entity as described by the kind of theories we've looked at so far. They see, to just be expressions which fulfil some other function in our social lives.

(5) **(a)** This very fact is something that the later Wittgenstein thinks is a core insight. There are rules which govern when these different linguistic behaviours — for example, greeting — is appropriate and what effects they have. These rules specify the functional role of the expression and are what we need to know in order to understand them.

(b) For instance, to understand a greeting, 'Hello', we need to know that it's appropriate to say when you meet someone and that it results in beginning a linguistic interaction.

(c) Wittgenstein proposes that we can think of our use of language as if we're playing a game with each other, where every utterance is a move that changes the state of the game. Just like in an ordinary game, there are rules which determine which moves are permitted in what positions and how moves alter the state of the game.

(d) To understand an expression or sentence is to have mastered its role in the *language-game* it occurs in. What gives an expression its meaning is precisely the rules which govern its use.

(e) We can compare that with what characterises the different pieces ina game of chess. What makes a bishop be a bishop and not something else is exactly the rule that it moves only diagonally and which square it starts the game on. What the piece itself looks like is entirely irrelevant.

(6) **(a)** After we've identified the meaning of an expression with the functional role it has in a language-game, Wittgenstein doesn't think that there is anything more to say about it.

(b) To ask for the meaning of an expression beyond that is like asking what is the underlying nature of a bishop which explains why it can only move diagonally on the chess board. Just like chess pieces don't have an abstract essence, linguistic expressions lack meaning-entities which explain the rules governing their use.

(c) Similarly, Wittgenstein doesn't think there's any reason to talk about the reference of an expression. There might be rules which say that, for example, that we should only use an expression in the right kind of environment, but that's not the same as saying that there is a reference relation between the word and some object in that environment.

(7) Although the theory accrues several advantages by not postulating any entities beyond human interaction it faces some objections of its own. Även om teorin har många fördelar av att den inte introducerar några entiteter bortom mänskliga interaktioner så finns det naturligtvis invändningar.

(a) One immediate problem is that it seems like the word 'water' does actually mean the same thing for us as it does for our couterparts on Twin-Earth. They play the same language-game with the word and use it according to the same rules. But this seems to contradict the externalist idea that the meaning of our words depends on how the world is and the causal sources of their use.

(b) What is the difference between a language-game and an ordinary game? We wouldn't want to say that a chess move is meaningful in the same way that a linguistic utterance is. But both are rule-governed activities established by convention.

(c) The way Wittgenstein describes rules of use seems almost entirely behaviouristic; they don't seem to presuppose any cognitive awareness of the activity at all. Consider, for example, large language models which you can have a chat with. They follow essentially all the rules for the language they use. But would we want to say that it *understands* what it writes?

(8) Moving on, we get to Sellars' inferential theory of meaning. Just like Wittgenstein, he's not interested in entity theories and instead wants to consider how language is used. He makes the point that we can perfectly understand talk about meaning as relating different uses. For example,

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'Rot' means red in German.

</div>

is best understood as a way of saying

<div align="center">

'Rot':s are German 'Red':s

</div>

That is, they are saying that the tokens of 'Rot' in German play the same functional role as tokens of 'Red' do in English; they're governed by the corresponding rules. These are the same kind of statements which we can make between two chess sets which have differently shaped pieces, relating the unfamiliar ones to the familiar.

(9) The kind of use which Sellars is most interested in is how sentences figure into reasoning. As such, the core idea of his theory is that what we need to know in order to understand a sentence is the *inferential relations* which it figures in. That is, which correct arguments does the sentence occur in as either a premise or conclusion.

   (a) Part of understanding the sentence

   > Lund is to the north of Malmö.

   is to know that we can conclude it from the premise

   > Malmö is to the south of Lund.

   (b) Sellars also stresses that we shouldn't understand all valid inferential relations as being so because they are logical or analytical. There isn't any underlying logical form, meaning-entity or hidden premise which makes them valid.

   (c) What does make certain inferences valid is our social practice of using sentences for reasoning. An inference from a premise P to a conclusion Q is valid if speakers of the language tend to accept the move from P to Q Vad som istället ligger till grund är vår sociala praktik av att resonera med meningar. En inferens från premissen P till slutsatsen Q är giltig om talare av språket tenderar att acceptera argumentet från P till Q in conversation to the point that it establishes a conventional rule that one ought to do so.

   (d) In this way, rules of inference depend on social use of sentences in reasoning.

(10) Sellars distinguishes between three kinds of inferential rules.

   (a) *Language internal rules*, or sometimes language-language rules, are our standard kind of inferences where some sentences figure as both premises and conclusion.

   (b) *Language-entry rules* are ones where the conclusion is a sentence but the premise is not. Instead we respond to some sensory stimuli of our environment by drawing a conclusion.

   (c) *Language-exit rules* are ones where the premise is a sentence but the conclusion is not. Instead, the conclusion is the performance of an action which is appropriate as a result of accepting the premise.

(11) All of this makes Sellars' theory a little more resistant to the objections to the Wittgensteinian picture.

   (a) Sellars would not accept that the word 'water' is governed by the same rules for us and our Twin-Earth counterparts. It differs in what language-entry rules it has, since it is appropriate for us to apply when we respond to H_2O whereas it is appropriate for our counterparts in response to XYZ.

   (b) He also has a response to what distinguishes language from other rule-governed games. Rules of inference are rules which concern belief. They govern *the game of giving and asking*

for reasons, which is what makes language meaningful in its own special way. These kind of rules don't occur in chess or football.

(c) Sellars' description of linguistic use is not entirely in terms of external behaviour. Although it is the eternal linguistic practice of reasoning which legitimates inferences, making an inference is a cognitive phenomenon. To master the rules which are required to understand language you have to be capable to use them for reasoning.

(12) There is, however, a problem for both Sellars and Wittgenstein, namely our old friend compositionality. That language is compositional is usually taken as both a fact which needs to be explained by a theory of meaning and as a necessary feature for that theory to explain how we can produce and understand an unlimited number of unfamiliar sentences.

(a) Both Sellars and Wittgenstein focus on expressions which are complete enough that they can meaningfully occur on their own.

(b) For Wittgenstein, a complete sentence is the smallest unit which can be used to make a move in a language-game.

(c) For Sellars, a complete sentence is the kind of expression which can occur as a premise or conclusion. A lone name or predicate can't occur in an inferential rule.

(d) So, both begin from sentences as the smallest unit which their theory takes to be meaningful. As such, it's not clear how either of them could explain how simpler expressions, like names and predicates, mean anything and how what complete sentences mean depends on their constituents.

(13) A more contemporary use-theory is proposed by Brandom (1994), who extends ideas from both Wittgenstein and Sellars. He maintains Sellars' core idea that socially ground rules of inference are what distinguishes meaningful language. But he also borrows an idea from David Lewis about *score-keeping in a language-game*.

(a) Lewis makes the point that if we take the idea of language-games seriously, we should consider the current score of the game. A core feature of games and rule-governed systems is that their current state and permissible moves depends on and can be altered by previous ones.

(b) If we have a model for the current state of the game, then we can give a description of moves in the game in terms of how they alter that state.

(c) Brandom runs with this idea by envisioning the conversational score in terms of how each participant relates to the claims which are relevant to the conversation. There are two statuses one can have with respect to a claim: *commitment* and *entitlement*.

(d) Both of these are essentially *normative* statuses. When I'm committed to a claim, I'm bound to act and reason as if I take it to be true. When I'm attributed entitlement to a claim, I'm taken to be epistemically allowed to commit to it. In this way, commitment and entitlement are socially normative counterparts to having a belief and being justified in having it.

(e) When I make an assertion that P, what I do is that I commit myself to it and present myself as entitled to that commitment. So, for Brandom, language use is a fundamentally normative affair.

(14) Distinguishing commitment and entitlement also allows us distinguish further types of inferences.

(a) Some rules of inference go from commitment to commitment. That is, if I'm committed to the claim that

My sweater is read.

then we can infer commitment to the claim that

My sweater is coloured.

(b) Other rules only go from entitlements to entitlements. That is, if I'm entitled to

This match was struck.

we can infer that I'm entitled to the claim that

This match will light.

but it doesn't follow that I'm committed to it. I might be committed to some other claim, like that the match is wet, which precludes my commitment to that it will light.

(c) So, Brandom is open to a wider notion of rules of inference than Sellars. Some of the rules which govern the use of a sentence don't require the speaker to commit to either the premise or the conclusion. And since grasping these rules is what it means to understand the sentence, the way we understand meaningful expressions is knowing how they affect our commitments and entitlements to other sentences when we assert them.

(15) Brandom also attempts to make his theory partially compositional to avoid that objection, but there's no easy way to explain how he goes about doing so. The basic idea is to articulate the notion of indirect inferential contribution of a name or predicate in terms of how they can be substituted for each other in arguments without turning them invalid. Essentially, we can think of a name as having its meaning decided by which other terms it can be substituted for in valid inferences without making them invalid.

(16) Naturally, there are some objections to Brandom which also apply to Sellars and Wittgenstein.

(a) Reference is almost entirely absent from these theories. Since they avoid connecting expressions to entities, they also happily deny that there is a reference relation between singular terms and objects. But how are we then to explain the intuition that my name points to me if the only things we can use in the explanation are rules of use or inferences?

(b) Without meaning-entities or reference it doesn't seem possible to keep the idea that sentences are true if they depict the world correctly. As such, there is a challenge to explain how we use the concept of truth in use-theoretic terms. For this reason, use-theorists tend to advocate either a deflationary or a pragmatist theory of truth.

(c) Finally we get to what's usually considered the biggest objection to use-theories: they seem to entail a *holistic* view of meaning. Rules for use and inference are not about individual sentences or expressions. They relate different expressions to each other. If these rules are what we need to master in order to understand, then we can't understand any expression in isolation. As such, the theories have the difficulty of explaining how we can learn a language if we need to learn to understand all of its sentences at the same time.