<u>WORD MEANING</u>
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> I propose and defend an account of what we mean by sentences of the form '*w* means *m*', such as "'London' means London": by '*w* means *m*' we mean that *w* is fashionably used to mean *m*. More explicitly, we mean that events in which *w* is used to mean something are fashionably events in which *w* is used to mean *m* (so, according to this account, we use '*w* means *m*' to quantify over events). I use this account to give new answers to some old and difficult questions about word meaning.

Questions about word meaning have proven to be some of the most difficult in the philosophy of language. Some of those questions are about words in general: What is the connection between the meaning of a word and its use? How does a word acquire meaning, and how does it change meaning (when it does)? Why are there normative facts about word use? Some of those questions are about names in particular: Is the meaning of a name that to which it refers (if it does), or something else, such as a Fregean sense? If it is that to which it refers, then how should we account for the existence of names that refer to the same thing and yet seem to differ in meaning ('Hesperus' and 'Phosphorus'), and for the existence of names that do not refer and yet seem to have meaning ('Vulcan')? If it is a Fregean sense, then what exactly are Fregean senses, how can they explain our intuitions about 'Hesperus', Phosphorus' and 'Vulcan', and what is the connection between the sense of a name and that to which the name refers (if it does)?

I think that we can make better progress towards answering these questions than has so far been made, by first getting clear about what we mean when we talk about what words mean, and that is my aim in this paper. I will propose a semantic account of what it is that we mean, and then use it to answer the questions above. I will not consider all of those questions in this paper – only those that have to do with words in general. I shall consider the questions about names in a subsequent paper.

<u>1. A proposal</u>

I shall propose and defend an account of what we mean when we talk about what words mean. In particular, what we mean by sentences such as:

(1)   a. 'London' means London.
       b. 'American' means American.[1]

My proposal is this:

(WM)   If *w* is a word and *m* is a meaning, then by '*w* means *m*' we mean:
       a. that *w* is used to mean *m*; or
       b. that events in which *w* is used to mean something are events in which it is used to mean *m*; or

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[1] Some people find these sentences ungrammatical. Even so, I take it that they are interpretable (plenty of ungrammatical sentences are nevertheless interpretable: 'John and Mary walks together'). My interest in this paper is in what we interpret them to mean, whether or not we find them ungrammatical.

        c. that events in which *w* is used to mean something are fashionably events in which it is used to mean *m*.[2]

For instance:

(2)   By "'London' means London" we mean:
        a. that 'London' is used to mean London; or
        b. that events in which 'London' is used to mean something are events in which it is used to mean London; or
        c. that events in which 'London' is used to mean something are fashionably events in which it is used to mean London.[3]

WM is a semantic claim. It has an immediate metaphysical consequence in which I shall be particularly interested:

(WM')   If *w* is a word and *m* is a meaning, then for *w* to mean *m* is for *w* to be fashionably used to mean *m*.

In Section 2, I clarify WM. In Section 3, I use WM' to answer several of the questions with which I began this paper. In Section 4, I consider three more consequences of WM and WM'.

2. Some clarifications

1. WM.a, WM.b, and WM.c do not specify three distinct things that we mean by '*w* means *m*' – they are intended to make increasingly explicit one single thing that we mean by '*w* means *m*'.

2. WM might seem obvious and trivial, but it is not. For one thing, it claims that we use '*w* means *m*' to quantify over events (as WM.b makes clear), and that is neither obvious nor trivial. In fact, I hope to show in this paper that it has much explanatory power.

3. It might seem at first glance that WM is circular, but it is not. WM gives an account of what we mean by '*w* means *m*', not an account of what we mean by 'mean'. So we can use 'mean' to formulate WM without rendering WM circular. Consider an analogous account of what we mean by 'Mops clean floors': by 'Mops clean floors' we mean that mops are used to clean floors. It would be a mistake to accuse this account of circularity on the grounds that its formulation uses 'clean'. In the same way, it would be a mistake to accuse WM of circularity on the grounds that its formulation uses 'mean'.

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[2] By '*w* means *m*' I mean the concatenation of '*w*', 'means', and '*m*'. Following Quine (1940, pp. 33-7) I could use corner quotes to indicate this, but I won't.

[3] I am restricting my attention in this paper to the meaning of words; in particular, to the meaning of unstructured words such as 'London' and 'American', rather than structured words such as 'lovable' and 'misunderstand'. I believe that WM is true not just of unstructured words, but of all linguistic expressions, be they structured or unstructured (and that includes sentences). The reason that I am restricting my attention to unstructured words is that structured expressions introduce issues that I'd prefer to avoid. 'Misgoogle' and 'John looks like Wendy's left thumb', for example, both mean something, even though neither has ever been used (I assume). This is *prima facie* a problem for WM, and the claim that it is not a problem needs careful defence.

4. Is the consequence WM' circular? It might be, if it were an account of meaning in general. But it is not an account of meaning in general. It is an account of what words mean in terms what words are used to mean. We might say that it is an account of one kind of meaning, *word meaning*, in terms of another kind of meaning, *speaker meaning*. Some might be disappointed by this, expecting that any interesting account of word meaning ought to be given without appeal to meaning of any kind. I don't think that is right. Such an account might be illuminating, even if it retains reference to meaning. I believe that it is, and hope to show so in this paper.

5. I hesitate somewhat to describe WM' as giving an account of word meaning in terms of speaker meaning, because I don't want to suggest that 'mean' is ambiguous, between a sense with which we use it to ascribe meaning to words, and a sense with which we use it to ascribe meaning to speakers. I do not think that 'mean' is ambiguous in this way. I think that what we mean by 'mean' in the former case is identical to what we mean by 'mean' in the latter. As I will discuss below, what we mean by 'mean' in both cases is a certain kind of event.

6. As I just mentioned, we can think of WM' as giving an account of word meaning in terms of speaker meaning. The idea that word meaning should be accounted for in terms of speaker meaning is by no means new – it is a claim that Grice made back in the 1950s and 60s.[4] Grice claimed something like this: w means m amongst a group of speakers iff the group has a procedure for using w to refer to m. As his use of 'iff' indicates, Grice's claim is a weaker kind of claim than WM': it is a claim about necessary and sufficient conditions under which w means m, whereas WM' is a claim about what it *is* for w to mean m. But if we understand Grice as making the stronger kind of claim then his account is very close to WM' – where he talks about procedures and reference, I talk about fashions and meaning. We can thus think of this paper as endorsing a (largely) Gricean account of word meaning. But I derive this account as a consequence of WM – an account of what we mean when we talk about what words mean. So I am giving an explanation of *why* an account of word meaning in terms of speaker meaning is correct: it is correct because when we talk about what words mean we are, in fact, talking about what speakers mean, by quantifying over events in which speakers mean something by those words.

7. As will be evident from the formulation of WM, I take it that there are such things as meanings (I quantify over them in WM). I see no need to think of meanings as a special kind of thing – anything can be a meaning (well, at least very many things). If I use the word 'London' to mean London, then the meaning that I use 'London' to mean is the city London. If I use the word 'American' to mean American, then the meaning that I use 'American' to mean is the property American. Meanings are ordinary everyday particulars, properties, and relations – they count as being meanings simply because they are meant (by someone, or by some word). In this respect they are like gifts. Gifts are not a special kind of thing – anything can be a gift (well, at least many things). Gifts are ordinary everyday things – they count as being gifts simply because they are given (by someone, to someone).

8. When a speaker uses a word to mean something, there are, I believe, two things that count as what the speaker uses the word to mean. One is that which is often called the

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[4] Grice develops this claim in his (1957), (1968), and (1969).

content of the word in the speaker's mouth – whatever it is that the speaker uses the word to contribute to the proposition that she expresses; the other is what Frege and many following him have called the *sense* with which the speaker uses the word – something like the mode with which she presents the content. So there are two kinds of thing that a speaker uses a word to mean. I intend WM to apply to both, with the result that there are two kinds of thing that a word means (two kinds of word meaning) – content and sense. The sense of a word is something that I shall discuss in depth in a subsequent paper. Here I am interested only in the content of a word, and this is what I mean throughout this paper by its meaning. To make this clear I shall sometimes use a word in block capitals to mean the content of that word. Thus, by 'LONDON' I mean the content of 'London', and by 'AMERICAN' I mean the content of 'American'.[5]

9. According to WM.a, we use '*w* means *m*' to talk about how *w* is used. This might seem surprising, given that we do not explicitly mention use in the sentence '*w* means *m*'. But it ought not be surprising. We often talk about how things are used without making that explicit in the sentences that we use to do so. Plausibly what we mean by the (i) sentences in (3) below can be given by the (ii) sentences. If that is right, then here are three cases in which we talk about use without making it explicit that we are doing so.

(3)   a. i. Mops clean floors.
            ii. Mops are used to clean floors.
        b. i. Guns kill people.
            ii. Guns are used to kill people.
        c. i. Newspapers keep us informed.
            ii. Newspapers are used to keep us informed.

Given that we often talk about how things are used using sentences that do not make that explicit, and given that we use words, we should not be surprised to find that we talk about how we use words using sentences that do not make that explicit. According to WM.a we do, using sentences such as '*w* means *m*'.

10. I should say more about what I think is going on here. According to a view of verbs that I find plausible, often what we mean by a verb on an occasion of use is a kind of event, and what we mean by the subject and complement of the verb on that occasion are participants in events of that kind.[6]

A murder – that is, an event of which 'murder' is true – typically has three participants, which I shall call its *agent*, *instrument*, and *patient*: the agent uses the instrument to murder the patient. If there was a murder whose agent was John, whose instrument was a bomb, and whose patient was Mary, then we might use each of the following sentences to mean something that is true:

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[5] The definite descriptions in this sentence are reference-fixing rather than meaning-giving. So when I say that by 'LONDON' I mean the content of 'London', I mean that by 'LONDON' I mean *x*, where *x* is the content of 'London'; I do not mean that 'LONDON' can be paraphrased as "the content of 'London'".

[6] Davidson (1967) first argued that verbs express relations which contain an argument place for an event. The view that I describe here is a neo-Davidsonian development. For a good account, see Parsons (1990).

(4)   a. John murdered Mary.
       b. A bomb murdered Mary.

What we would mean by (4a) is that there was a murder whose patient was Mary and whose agent was John; what we would mean by (4b) is that there was a murder whose patient was Mary and whose instrument was a bomb. Since in (4b) we use 'A bomb' to mean the instrument of the murder, what we mean by (4b) can be put this way instead:

(5)   A bomb was used to murder Mary.

Here we have a case in which we use a sentence to talk about use, without making it explicit that we are doing so.

We might use 'John' in (4a) to mean the instrument of the murder (rather than the agent), and we might use 'A bomb' in (4b) to mean the agent of the murder (rather than the instrument). But then, with the facts as described, what we would mean by each would be false: the agent was not a bomb, and the instrument was not John. In fact, if x is an inanimate object, then what is meant by 'x murdered y' can only be true if 'x' is used in this sentence to mean the instrument of the murder – an inanimate object is not the kind of thing that can be the agent of a murder. There is a structural ambiguity in (4a) and (4b), according to whether the subject of the sentence is used to specify the agent or the instrument of the relevant murder.[7,8]

In a similar way, a meaning – that is, an event of which 'mean' is true – typically has three participants, which I shall call its *agent*, *instrument*, and *goal*: the agent uses the instrument (typically a word or other linguistic expression) to mean the goal. By the goal of the event I mean what is often called the *content* of the expression that is used. If there was a meaning whose agent was Mary, whose instrument was 'American', and whose goal was AMERICAN (the property of being American), then we might use each of the following sentences to mean something that is true:

(6)   a. Mary meant AMERICAN.
       b. 'American' meant AMERICAN.

What we would mean by (6a) is that there was a meaning whose goal was AMERICAN and whose agent was Mary; what we would mean by (6b) is that there was a meaning whose goal was AMERICAN and whose instrument was 'American'. Since we use 'American' in (6b) to mean the instrument of the meaning, what we mean by (6b) can be put this way instead:

(7)   'American' was used to mean AMERICAN.

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[7] I am using the terms 'agent', 'instrument', and 'patient' to refer to participants in events. They are sometimes used to refer to expressions that specify participants in events: an expression e is assigned the agent role of a verb v just in case e is used to specify the agent participant of the relevant event. That is not how I am using the terms here.

[8] Why a structural ambiguity, as opposed to some other kind? I am assuming that every ambiguity is either lexical or structural, and that this ambiguity is not lexical. In any case, there is no real need to label it as one kind of ambiguity rather than another.

Here we have another case in which we use a sentence to talk about use, without making it explicit that we are doing so.

We might use 'Mary' in (6a) to mean the instrument of the meaning (rather than the agent), and we might use 'American' in (6b) to mean the agent of the meaning (rather than the instrument). But then, with the facts as described, what we would mean by each would be false: the agent was not 'American', and the instrument was not Mary. In fact, if w is a word, then what is meant by 'w meant m' can only be true if 'w' is used in this sentence to mean the instrument of the meaning – a word is not the kind of thing that can be the agent of a meaning. There is a structural ambiguity in (6a) and (6b), according to whether the subject of the sentence is used to specify the agent or the instrument of the relevant meaning event.

I take this to be a common pattern of use. It would not be unusual to use the subject of (8a) below to mean the instrument of a buying, rather than the agent (although it might be used to mean the agent). So too with each of the other examples in (8) – it would not be unusual in each case to use the subject of the sentence to mean the instrument of the relevant warning, stopping, hitting, cutting, or breaking event, and not the agent of the event (although it might be used in each case to mean the agent).

(8) a. The prize money bought me a new car.
     b. The sign warned me to slow down.
     c. The button stopped the treadmill.
     d. The stick hit Mary.
     e. The scissors cut the paper.
     f. The hammer broke the vase.[9]

When the subject is used to mean the instrument in this way, what is meant in each case can be given as follows:

(9) a. The prize money was used to buy me a new car.
     b. The sign was used to warn me to slow down.
     c. The button was used to stop the treadmill.
     d. The stick was used to hit Mary.
     e. The scissors were used to cut the paper.
     f. The hammer was used to break the vase.

Here we have a variety of cases in which we use a sentence to talk about use, without making it explicit that we are doing so.

So far I have been considering particular (non-generic) readings of sentences, but the pattern of use that I am describing extends to generic readings of sentences as well. There are generic readings of the (i) sentences in (10) below, on which their subjects are used to mean the instrument of the relevant events. On these readings they can be paraphrased by the sentences in (ii) (if the (ii) sentences are also read generically).

(10) a. i. Bombs murder people.
        ii. Bombs are used to murder people.

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[9] I take it that these are not cases of personification – we are not speaking as if the prize, the sign, the button, the stick, the scissors, or the hammer are intentional agents.

    b. i. Prize money buys cars.
        ii. Prize money is used to buy cars.
    c. i. Signs warn people to slow down.
        ii. Signs are used to warn people to slow down.[10]

I propose that we use '*w* means *m*' generically in this way, and in each case we use the subject of the sentence to mean the instrument of the relevant meaning events. What we mean by (11a) below, for example, can be given by the sentence in (11b) (if it is also read generically):

(11) a. 'American' means American.
      b. 'American' is used to mean American.

The general result is WM.

It is important to note that sometimes we ascribe meaning via generic uses of sentences, as in "'London' means London", and sometimes we ascribe meaning via particular uses of sentences, as in "John used 'London' (just then) to mean London". It is only with ascriptions of the first kind that we quantify over events (plausibly, we use ascriptions of the second kind to talk about particular events).

11. According to WM.b, we use '*w* is used to mean *m*' to quantify over events. This might seem surprising, given that we do not make that quantification explicit in the sentence '*w* is used to mean *m*'. But it ought not be surprising. There are many sentences that have generic readings on which we use them to quantify over events, without making that quantification explicit. Consider, for example, 'Mary jogs in the park'. This has a generic reading on which we use it to quantify over events, a reading on which it means that events in which Mary jogs somewhere are events in which she jogs in the park. I take it that there are generic readings of the (i) sentences below on which we use it to quantify over events in a way made explicit by the (ii) sentences:

(12) a. i. John walks in the garden.
        ii. Events in which John walks somewhere are events in which he walks in the garden.
      b. i. Scissors are used to cut things.
        ii. Events in which scissors are used to do something are events in which they are used to cut things.
      c. i. Dogs bark at intruders.
        ii. Events in which dogs react some way to intruders are events in which they bark at intruders.

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[10] I prefer to talk about generic readings (or uses) of sentences, rather than about generic sentences. There is some temptation to call a sentence such as 'Mary jogs in the park' a generic sentence, but I think that would be a mistake. Although the most natural reading of this sentence is one on which it is used to generalise over events, there is also a reading on which it is used to describe a particular event instead (a reading on which a commentator might use it: 'Mary puts on her shoes. Mary jogs in the park. Mary goes home. …'). So the sentence has both generic and non-generic readings, and we ought not say that the sentence itself is generic.

12. 'Mary jogs in the park' actually has more than one generic reading on which it used to quantify over events. It has the one I just mentioned, repeated in (13a) below, and also (at least) the two in (13b) and (13c):

(13) a. Events in which Mary jogs somewhere are events in which she jogs in the park.
     b. Events in which Mary does something in the park are events in which she jogs in the park.
     c. Events in which Mary does something are events in which she jogs in the park.

We can make one of these readings more salient than the others by using emphasis. Emphasising 'in the park', as in 'Mary jogs <u>in the park</u>', makes the (13a) reading more salient. Emphasising 'jogs', as in 'Mary <u>jogs</u> in the park', makes the (13b) reading more salient. Emphasising 'jogs in the park', as in 'Mary <u>jogs in the park</u>', makes the (13c) reading more salient.

In a similar way, 'w is used to mean m' has more than one generic reading on which it is used to quantify over events. It has the one given in WM.b, repeated in (14a) below, and also at least the one in (14b):

(14) a. Events in which w is used to mean something are events in which w is used to mean m.
     b. Events in which something is used to mean m are events in which w is used to mean m.

We can make the (14.a) reading more salient by emphasising 'm', as in 'w is used to mean <u>m</u>'. We can make the (14.b) more salient by emphasising 'w', as in '<u>w</u> is used to mean m'.

According to WM, 'w means m' can be paraphrased as 'w is used to mean m'. If there are multiple readings of the latter, as I have just claimed, then we would expect there to be multiple readings of the former. I believe that there are. There are at least two readings of 'w means m', one of which can be made more salient by emphasising 'w', as in '<u>w</u> means m', and one of which can be made more salient by emphasising 'm', as in 'w means <u>m</u>'. These correspond to the two readings of 'w is used to mean m' in (14). In WM I am clarifying what we mean by 'w means m' on the first reading, on which we use it to specify that it is m (rather than something else) that w means. There is a corresponding clarification of what we mean by 'w means m' on the second reading, on which we use it to specify that it is w (rather than something else) that means m. In this paper, I shall focus on just the first reading.

13. Even this is not enough clarification of what we mean by 'Mary jogs in the park'. The (13a) interpretation itself has at least the following two interpretations:

(15) a. Events in which Mary jogs somewhere are *generally* events in which Mary jogs in the park.
     b. Events in which Mary jogs somewhere are *sometimes* events in which Mary jogs in the park.

To see this we need only generate appropriate contexts of use of 'Mary jogs in the park'. The following two contexts should suffice:

(16) a. A: Where does Mary jog?
            B: Mary jogs in the park.
      b. A: Mary never jogs in the park.
            B: That's not true, Mary jogs in the park.[11]

The same is true of 'w is used to mean m' – the interpretation in WM.b itself has a variety of interpretations, which can be brought out by including various adverbs of quantification. Given this, it is important to clarify which reading of WM.b is intended, and that is what WM.c does.

Following Lewis (1975), I take it that we use the adverbs 'generally' and 'sometimes' in the sentences in (15) above to quantify over *cases* – by 'generally' we mean in most cases, and by 'sometimes' we mean in some cases. In the sentences in (15) the cases happen to be *events*, so we can formalise the sentences as follows:

(17) a. [most e: Mary jogs somewhere in e](Mary jogs in the park in e)
      b. [some e: Mary jogs somewhere in e](Mary jogs in the park in e)

We can think of the determiners 'most' and 'some' in (17) as expressing relations between properties of events (or *kinds* of events). (17a) is true iff the relation MOST obtains between properties p_1 and p_2, where p_1 is the property of being an event in which Mary jogs somewhere, and p_2 is the property of being an event in which Mary jogs in the park. (17b) is true iff a different relation obtains between p_1 and p_2 – the relation SOME. In general, what a speaker means by 'Mary jogs in the park' is a proposition of the form in (18) below, where D is a determiner and Φ and Ψ are predicates of events:

(18) [D e: $\Phi(e)$]$\Psi(e)$.[12]

What I mean by 'w is used to mean m' in WM is a proposition of the same form. What I mean is this:

(19) a. Events in which w is used to mean something are fashionably events in which w is used to mean m.

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[11] I am not claiming that the sentence 'Mary jogs in the park' is ambiguous. I am claiming that it can be used by a speaker to mean a variety of propositions, not that the sentence itself means a variety of propositions. I don't think that the sentence means either of the two propositions in (15) that the speaker might mean. In other words, I don't think that the speaker says either of these two things, even if she means them. It is not at all unusual for a speaker to mean something by a sentence that the sentence itself does not mean. By 'There is no more beer', for example, a speaker might mean that there is no more beer in the fridge, but that is not what the sentence means. For a discussion and account of this phenomenon, see Bach (1994) and Recanati (2002). So what does 'Mary jogs in the park' mean? My own view is that it means a kind of event; an event is of this kind just in case it is an event in which Mary jogs in the park. My reason for thinking this is that a commentator might use this sentence to describe an event. A speaker might use it to assert that there is an event of this kind, or that the events in some domain are generally of this kind, but neither of these propositions is what the sentence itself means, because a speaker might use it to simply describe an event. But nothing in this thesis depends upon this particular view.

[12] The standard view in the literature on characterising sentences is that it is the same determiner that is understood in each case, often called 'gen', expressing the relation GEN – see Krifka et. al. (1995). I see no reason to think that.

b. [fashionable e: w is used to mean something in e](w is used to mean m in e)

What I mean is that the relation FASHIONABLE holds between the property of being an event in which w is used to mean something, and the property of being an event in which w is used to mean m.

14. I take it that the choice of 'fashionably' in WM.c is controversial. Why do I think that 'fashionably' is the right adverb to use in the formulation of WM? To start with, I think that 'always', 'sometimes', 'typically', 'usually', 'generally', and 'often' would be wrong adverbs to use. That is, I think that each of the following accounts would be false:

(20)   By 'w means m' we mean that w is {always, sometimes, typically, usually, generally, often} used to mean m.

An account that used 'always' would be false: it is possible for w to mean m, even if w is not always used to mean m (it is sometimes used to mean something other than m). An account that used 'sometimes' would be false: it is possible that w does not mean m even if w is sometimes used to mean m. An account that used 'usually', 'generally', or 'typically' would be false: it is possible for w to be ambiguous between meanings m_1 and m_2 in such a way that it is used equally often to mean each; then it would be true that w means m_1 but false that w is usually, generally, or typically used to mean m_1 (and the same with m_2) – 'usually', 'generally', or 'typically' would not sufficiently well allow for the phenomenon of ambiguity.[13] An account that used 'often' might be more plausible, but would also be false: if w just happens to often be used to mean m, when on each occasion of use the speaker chose to use w more or less at random, then w does not count as meaning m (it seems to me), even though w is often used to mean m – there needs to be a reason why w is often used to mean m.[14]

An account that used 'conventionally' would have a better chance of being correct. It does not predict that a word w can mean m simply by often being used to mean m – it must be used to mean m as a matter of convention. It would also account for the common intuition that word meaning is in some way conventional. Because words can acquire meaning without any explicit declaration of what they are to mean, we would have to understand 'convention' in such a way that there can be a convention about how a word is used in the absence of any explicit declaration. This seems slightly counterintuitive, but Lewis (1969) has argued that there is such an understanding of 'convention'. Nevertheless, appealing to fashion rather than convention strikes me as a better way to account for the facts about word meaning. In particular, it strikes me that word meanings come about and change more in the way that fashions do than in the way that conventions do (I shall discuss this in the next section). Moreover, there is a way of explaining the intuition that our use of words is in some way conventional. I propose this: when faced with a choice of which word to use to mean m, we have a

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[13] There is a view according to which the one word can never have more than one meaning – cases in which it appears that the one word has two distinct meanings are really cases in which two distinct words have the same surface form. If this view is correct, then the reasons I have given for rejecting an account in terms of 'usually', 'generally' or 'typically' do not stand. Nevertheless, the reasons that I next give for rejecting an account using 'often' also apply to accounts using 'usually', 'generally' and 'typically', even if the one word can never have more than one meaning.

[14] Recall my belief that if a speaker can mean m at all then she can use whatever word she likes to mean m.

convention to use whichever word it is that is fashionably used to mean *m*. In short: we have a convention to follow the fashion. There is thus a sense in which we do have a convention to use 'London' to mean London: we have a convention to use 'London' to mean what it is fashionably used to mean; 'London' is fashionably used to mean London; so, in a sense, we have a convention to use 'London' to mean London. What I am proposing is that fashion and convention are *both* involved in our use of words to mean things.

I have no knock-down argument that we should use 'fashionably' rather than 'conventionally' in the formulation of WM. In the end, we should choose on the basis of which account has the best explanatory power. In the next section I argue that we can explain various facts about word meaning as being specific instances of more general facts about fashion. If it turns out that they are better explained as being specific instances of more general facts about convention, then WM can be adjusted accordingly.

15. According to WM', for *w* to mean *m* is for *w* to be fashionably used to mean *m*. We might call this a theory of *word meaning as fashion*.

3. Some answers

I have proposed WM: that if *w* is a word and *m* is a meaning, then by '*w* means *m*' we mean that *w* is fashionably used to mean *m*. This has the consequence WM': for *w* to mean *m* is for *w* to be fashionably used to mean *m*. I shall now use WM' to answer four of the questions with which I began this paper.

What is the connection between the meaning of a word and its use?

Intuitively, there is some connection between the meaning of a word and its use – either its meaning is its use (in some sense), or it supervenes upon its use (in some way).

According to WM', the meaning of a word *is* its use, in the following sense: what a word means is what it is fashionably used to mean.

This is not to say that there are no such things as meanings over and above use. A word can only be used (in the relevant sense) if there is something for it to be used to mean. If there were nothing for it to be used to mean – if there were no meanings – then there could be no use (of the relevant kind). Use depends upon the existence of meanings.

How do words acquire meaning?

According to WM', for *w* to mean *m* is for *w* to be fashionably used to mean *m*. So according to WM', for *w* to acquire *m* is for it to become true that *w* is fashionably used to mean *m*.

It is neither necessary nor sufficient for there to be a Kripke-style baptism – that is, an explicit declaration that *w* is to mean *m*.[15] I could start using 'bink' to mean NOSE, without ever declaring that by 'bink' I mean NOSE. All I need do is use 'bink' to mean

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[15] See Kripke (1981).

NOSE. People might understand that by 'bink' I mean NOSE, even if I never declare that by 'bink' I mean NOSE – our interpretative abilities are that good. If my use were to catch on, it might become true that 'bink' is fashionably used to mean NOSE (that there is a fashion to use it to mean NOSE), and hence that 'bink' means NOSE, even without there ever being an explicit declaration that 'bink' is to mean NOSE. So Kripke-style baptisms are not necessary. Even if I do explicitly declare that 'bink' is to mean NOSE, it would not thereby become true that 'bink' means NOSE. For it to become true that 'bink' means NOSE, it must become true that 'bink' is fashionably used to mean NOSE, and that is not something that I can just declare, no matter how much I try. If 'bink' is not fashionably used to mean NOSE, then 'bink' does not mean NOSE (and dictionary compilers ought not include 'bink', no matter how much I insist that 'bink' means NOSE). So Kripke-style baptisms are not sufficient. The fact that a Kripke-style baptism is neither necessary nor sufficient for a word to acquire meaning is a specific instance of a more general fact about fashion: that an explicit declaration is neither necessary nor sufficient for a fashion to arise.[16]

It is important that I be clear about the following. I take it that if a speaker can mean m at all, then she can use any word she likes to mean m. Some choices might be more prudent than others: it might be more prudent of me to use 'nose' rather than 'bink' to mean NOSE, because that might make it easier for others to understand what I mean. But I can, nevertheless, use any word that I like. It is an interesting and difficult question what it takes for a speaker to be able to mean m. But that is not a linguistic question about words – it is a metaphysical question about meaning events (which, if meaning events are mental events, is a question in the philosophy of mind).

It can be true that w is fashionably used to mean m, even if w is sometimes used to mean something other than m, but not unless w is sufficiently often used to mean m. This has consequences for how words acquire meaning. When a speaker uses a word to mean something, her interpreter must interpret what she means by the word. Presumably this is a very complex process, but we can single out one interpretive strategy as particularly important.

(21)   The speaker used w.
         w is fashionably used to mean m.
         Therefore, the speaker used w to mean m.

This is not a deductively valid inference. Nevertheless, it is a reasonable inference, one that interpreters make (perhaps tacitly), and one that speakers rely upon interpreters to make: if I can rely upon you to make this inference when I use 'red' to mean RED, then I need not rely upon other features of the context to help you understand that by 'red' I mean RED. Plausibly, this is why we might have a convention to follow the fashions in word use – so that we can reasonably make such inferences.

This has an important consequence:

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[16] Perhaps some people have the authority to dictate (stipulate) a new fashion in word use, in which case their baptisms might sometimes be sufficient. But the matter is not clear – perhaps they only have the power to dictate what the fashion is *to be*, rather than what it *is*, so that their baptisms do not give words meaning, but only dictate what meaning they are to be given. Either way, this is an issue in the philosophy of fashion, and not in the philosophy of language – we can defer to those who study fashion for answers to these questions.

(22)   The more a word w is used to mean m, the easier it is to be understood as using
         w to mean m.

That is: the more a word w is used to mean m, the less a speaker who uses w to mean m
has to rely upon the context to help her interpreter, and the more she can rely upon her
interpreter drawing the correct conclusion using (21). A friend of mine once meant
something by the following sentence:

(23)   I've misbelted myself.

I knew what she meant: that she had incorrectly put on her belt; I knew that by 'belt' she
meant PUT ON ONE'S BELT. It took a moment for me to work it out, because I had never
before encountered 'belt' being used to mean that. Compare this with how easy it would
have been for me to interpret what she meant by 'bottle' had she used the following
sentence instead:

(24)   I bottled some beer last night.

I would have known much more immediately that by 'bottle' she meant PUT INTO A
BOTTLE – I would have relied on my knowledge that in such sentences 'bottle' is
fashionably used to mean PUT INTO A BOTTLE, and she would have relied upon that
knowledge. If my friend's use of 'belt' in (23) were to catch on, then it may one day
become true that 'belt' is fashionably used to mean PUT ON ONE'S BELT, just as it has
become true that 'bottle' is fashionably used to mean PUT INTO A BOTTLE. Then anyone
who utters (23) will be able to rely more upon her interpreter's knowledge that 'belt' is
fashionably used to mean PUT ON ONE'S BELT to interpret what she means, and less upon
her knowledge of features of the context.

It is because of (22) that facts about what words mean snowball into existence. The
more a word w is used to mean m, the easier it becomes to be understood as using w to
mean m, so the more w will be used to mean m, so the easier it becomes to be
understood as using w to mean m, and so on, until it becomes true that w means m.

Here is another important consequence:

(25)   The more a word w is used to mean m, the harder it is to be understood as using
         w to mean anything other than m.

That is: the more a word w is used to mean m, the more a speaker who uses w to mean
something else has to rely upon the context to help her interpreter, and the more risk she
incurs that her interpreter will draw an incorrect conclusion using (21). An extreme case
would be if I used 'cat' to mean DOG – in an appropriate context I might be understood,
but it would require much interpretative work. A less extreme case would be if I used
'cash' to mean TURN INTO CASH (not exchange for cash, but turn into cash). 'Cash' is
often used by a speaker to mean EXCHANGE FOR CASH (as in 'I cashed a cheque'), and
that is how I am likely to be interpreted without sufficient contextual help. But if I am
discussing how I used my new magic wand to turn cheques into various things, then I
think I can be understood as using 'cash' to mean TURN INTO CASH:

(26)   I movie-ticketed a cheque, I student-carded a cheque, I even cashed a cheque.

It follows from (25) that word meaning is *stable*: the more a word *w* is used to mean *m*, the harder it is to be understood as using *w* to mean anything other than *m*, so the less *w* will be used to mean anything other than *m*.

How do words change meaning?

Even if the meaning of a word is stable, it need not be fixed. Its being difficult to be understood as using *w* to mean anything other than *m* is quite different from its being impossible. Right now, 'cat' means CAT, because 'cat' is fashionably used to mean CAT. I could start to use 'cat', the very same word, to mean DOG (recall my belief that I can use any word I like to mean DOG). If my use catches on, then it might become true that 'cat' is fashionably used to mean DOG, in which case it would be true that 'cat' means DOG. If, at the time, it is still true that 'cat' is fashionably used to mean CAT, then 'cat' will mean both CAT and DOG – it will have become ambiguous between CAT and DOG. But if it is no longer true that 'cat' is fashionably used to mean CAT, then 'cat' will only mean DOG – it will have changed meaning from CAT to DOG.

Why are there normative facts about word use?

There is a sense in which a speaker should use 'red' to mean RED. Why are there such normative facts about word use? If WM' is right, then we can say this: it is because there are normative facts about fashion.

Suppose there is presently a fashion for men to cut their hair short (and no fashion to cut it any other way). If I want to be fashionable, then I should cut my hair short. In fact, if I want to be fashionable then I must cut my hair short. But even if I just want people to like my haircut, without necessarily wanting to be fashionable, then there is still a sense in which I should cut my hair short, because one very effective way of getting people to like my haircut is to follow the current fashion of cutting my hair short. This is a weaker 'should' than the first, because people might like my haircut, even if it is not fashionably short. This is a pragmatic 'should'.

There is at present a fashion to use 'red' to mean RED (and, let's assume, no fashion to use it to mean anything else). If I want to be fashionable, then I should use 'red' to mean RED. In fact, if I want to be fashionable then I must use 'red' to mean RED. But even if I just want to be understood as meaning RED, without necessarily wanting to be fashionable, then there is still a sense in which I should use 'red' to mean RED, because one very effective way of being understood as meaning RED is to follow the current fashion of using 'red' to mean RED (especially if, as I have suggested, we have a convention to follow the fashions – to use words to mean what they are fashionably used to mean). This is a weaker 'should' than the first, because I might be understood, even if I use some word other than 'red' to mean RED. This, again, is a pragmatic 'should'.

So WM' allows us to view normative facts about word use as just specific instances of normative facts about fashion.

4. Three more things

I finish with some brief remarks about two more phenomena that WM and WM' can nicely explain, and about some of its implications for the meaning of indexicals.

M-sentences

One way to specify what a word means is to use what we might call an M-sentence ('M' for meaning), in which the word is both mentioned and used:

(27) a. 'London' means LONDON.
      b. 'American' means AMERICAN.

WM' explains how this is possible. If WM' is right, then to specify what a word means is to specify what it is fashionably used to mean. One way to specify what a word is fashionably used to mean is to show what it is fashionably used to mean by using it, and that is what we do in M-sentences. This is a general phenomenon: to specify what a hammer does is to specify what a hammer is used to do, and one way to specify what a hammer is used to do is to show what it used to do by using it.

Note that to show what a hammer is used to do, one must use the hammer to do what it is used to do. One could use the hammer to do something else, but then one would not be showing what the hammer is used to do. In the same way, to show what a word is fashionably used to mean, one must use the word to mean what it is fashionably used to mean. One could use the word to mean something else, but then one would not be showing what the word is fashionably used to mean. I could , for example, use 'AMERICAN' in (27b) above to mean GREEN, but then I would not be showing what 'American' means, because what I would be using it to mean is not what 'American' means. Disquotation is not enough: the disquoted word must be used with the meaning intended to be specified. Luckily, since 'American' does mean AMERICAN, then no matter what I actually use 'American' in (27b) to mean, I can be interpreted as using it to mean AMERICAN, and I can be interpreted as using (27b) to mean that 'American' means AMERICAN, even if in fact that is not what I mean, and the interpretation is a *mis*interpretation.

Domain restriction

If WM is correct, then we use '*w* means *m*' to quantify over events (events in which *w* is used to mean something). Thus, like all quantification, we would expect to find that we sometimes use it to quantify over a restricted domain of events, either explicitly or inexplicitly. Indeed we do. A speaker might use (28a) below to mean something that is true. In so doing, she would be implicitly restricting the domain of events over which she is quantifying to events that occur in Sydney. She could make that restriction explicit by uttering (28b) instead, and she could make what she means by (28b) even more explicit, if WM is correct, by uttering (28c).

(28) a. 'Here' means Sydney.
      b. 'Here' means Sydney in Sydney.
      c. Events in which 'here' is used in Sydney to mean something are events in which 'here' is used to mean Sydney.

Similarly, a speaker might use (29a) below to mean something that is true. In so doing, she would be implicitly restricting the domain of events over which she is quantifying to events whose agent is a speaker of French. She could make that restriction explicit by uttering (29b) instead, and she could make what she means by (29b) even more explicit, if WM is correct, by uttering (29c).

(29) a. 'Chair' means flesh.
      b. 'Chair' means flesh in French.
      c. Events in which 'chair' is used by a speaker of French to mean something are events in which 'chair' is used to mean flesh.

Facts such as these are nicely explained if, as WM claims, we use 'w means m' to quantify over events.

Indexicals

What does an indexical such as 'here' mean? According to WM', this is to ask: what is 'here' fashionably used to mean? Since there is no location x such that it is true that 'here' is fashionably used to mean x (unless the domain of quantification is suitably restricted) we cannot answer this question by specifying a single location. Nevertheless, we can still give an informative answer: 'here' is fashionably used to mean the location in which it is used; or: events in which 'here' is used to mean something are fashionably events in which it is used to mean the location of the event; or:

(30)   [fashionable e: 'here' is used to mean something in e][the x: e occurs at location x]('here' is used to mean x in e)

There is no location x such that 'here' is fashionably used to mean x, because the quantifier expression '[the x: e occurs at location x]' contains a variable 'e' that is bound by the quantifier expression '[fashionably e: 'here' is used to mean something in e]' and cannot be raised outside of its scope.

There is, however, a function f from contexts of utterance to locations, whose value at a context c is the location that 'here' is fashionably used to mean in that context. This function is often called the *Kaplanian character* of 'here'.[17] It might be useful to define a sense of 'mean' according to which the meaning of 'here' is its Kaplanian character. But if WM' is right then the meaning of 'here' is not its Kaplanian character, when 'mean' is understood in its ordinary non-technical sense. Why not? Because when a speaker uses 'here' to mean something, she does not use it to mean a Kaplanian character – she uses it to mean a location. So the meaning of an indexical (in the ordinary sense of 'mean') is not its Kaplanian character. It might be possible to use a Kaplanian character c to show what 'here' means, but that does not mean that 'here' means c. Here is an analogy: it might be possible to use a map to show where I go for vacation, but that does not mean that the map is where I go. So too, it might be possible to use a Kaplanian character to show what 'here' is used to mean, but that does not mean that the Kaplanian character is what it is used to mean. The point here is that there

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[17] See Kaplan (1989).

is no natural sense of 'mean' on which the meaning of an indexical is its Kaplanian character.[18]

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