"Saying 'Thank You!' and Expressing Gratitude: A Response to Schwartz"
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Introduction

'Ouch!' is semantically for expressing pain while 'Hello!' is for greeting. The former is therefore an *expressive*, a linguistic expression the meaning of which makes it for expressing one's mental states. In contrast, the latter can be characterized as a *situational* and an *effective*, the meaning of which makes it for using in certain social situations (e. g. when one is meeting someone) and the use of which generates a social status (e. g. that the addressee is greeted). What about 'Thank you!'?

The received view is that 'Thank you!' is for expressing gratitude (Searle 1979). In a recent paper published in this journal, Jeremy Schwartz has argued against this view, claiming instead that it is for expressing one's *judgment* that gratitude is appropriate or fitting. His arguments rely on cases where the speaker's feelings of gratitude don't match with their judgments about whether a grateful response is appropriate. He claims that our intuitions about speakers' sincerity in such cases militate against the received view and support the judgment view.

In this response I will argue against the judgment view while defending the received one. I will start by considering the objection that the judgment view is implausible since it makes 'Thank you!' semantically indistinguishable from the declarative sentence 'Gratitude is appropriate to you' and show that Schwartz's attempt to sidestep it relies on a misunderstanding of what it is for a sentence to be an expressive vs. a declarative (Section 1). Next, I will argue that Schwartz's arguments against the received view from intuitions about speakers' sincerity do not establish his desired conclusion and some of them actually seem to count against the judgment view (Section 2). Finally, I'll show that the received view's explanation of how 'Thank you!' sometimes functions as an effective is superior to Schwartz's explanation in terms of indirect speech acts. (Section 3).

1. Expressives vs. Declaratives

Schwartz thinks that when you say 'Thank you!' you don't express gratitude. Rather, you express the *judgment* that gratitude is appropriate. The basic problem with this view is that it seems to make 'Thank you!' semantically indistinguishable from the declarative sentence

'Gratitude is appropriate to you' which seems to express the same judgment. However, on the face of it, 'Thank you!' is nothing like the declarative: for example, it can't be negated, conjoined or disjoined, or used in the antecedent of a conditional.[1]

Schwartz is aware of this objection but thinks that it misses its mark. He hopes to rely on David Kaplan's work to restore the intuitive difference. His story goes as follows. Kaplan says that two sentences can have a different semantic function, an expressive vs. a declarative one, while encoding the same "semantic information". For example, 'Ouch!' is an expressive and 'I'm in pain' a declarative, but both encode the same information: *that the speaker is in pain*. Similarly, 'Oops!' is a situational and 'I've observed a minor mishap' a declarative, but they encode the information *that the speaker has observed a minor mishap*. Schwartz thinks that it follows that the two sentences in these pairs have the same use- or sincerity-conditions (Schwartz 2020: 6-7). This enables him to try to defuse the objection by telling the same story about 'Thank you!' vs. 'Gratitude is appropriate to you'. They have the same use-conditions, namely the judgment that gratitude is appropriate, yet they are not semantically indistinguishable since one is an expressive and the other a declarative.

This response is based on a misunderstanding of Kaplan's view of the relationship of 'Ouch!' and 'I'm in pain' and what it is for an expression to be an expressive or situational vs. a declarative. To get clear on this it helps to paint a quick picture of how to think about the meanings of expressives in comparison to declaratives. Think of any expression's *having* a meaning as a matter of it being governed by a rule of use that tells us in which conditions its correct or permissible to use it (Alston 2000, Kaplan MS, Reiland 2020). The normal form for stating such rules is the following (using *s* for speakers, *e* for expressions and *C* for use-conditions):

$$\forall s \ (s \text{ may use } e \text{ iff } C)$$

Then we can think of the expression's meaning as its use-condition *C*. Now, 'Ouch!' and 'Oops!' have the following use-conditions ((using $[[\ ]]_{UC}$ for a function that condenses the rule above and just assigns the expression to its use-condition):

[1] I will use 'declarative' to talk *only* about a type of sentence, sometimes also called an indicative, contrasting with interrogatives, imperatives, and expressives. This is different from the use of the term in Searle's categorization of speech acts into assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations or declaratives, which are supposed to be performative in creating new reality (e. g. 'The Q&A is open.' as uttered by a moderator doesn't report on a pre-existing fact, but opens the Q&A) (Searle 1979: 13-18). Thanks to an anonymous referee for pointing out the need for clarification.

(1) $[[\text{'Ouch!'}]]_{UC} = s$ is in pain

(2) $[[\text{'Oops!'}]]_{UC} = s$ has observed a minor mishap[2]

In stark contrast, *pace* Wittgenstein, the common view is that 'I'm in pain' and 'I've observed a minor mishap' have something like the following use-conditions:

(3) $[[\text{'I'm in pain'}]]_{UC} = s$ *judges* that s is in pain

(4) $[[\text{'I have observed a minor mishap'}]]_{UC} = s$ *judges* that s has observed a minor mishap[3]

As we can see, these pairs of expressions have radically different use-conditions. The former are permissibly used when s is in pain or has observed a minor mishap while the latter when s is in a propositional, representational attitude, judging that they're in pain or judging that they have observed a minor mishap. This is why when you use (1) you express pain, but when you use (3) you express your *judgment* that you're in pain and thereby *say* that you're in pain, something that is true iff you're in pain. And this difference just is what it is for the former to be an expressive and the latter a declarative! It is true that Kaplan also says that the two sentences in these pairs encode the same semantic information. But by this he just means that from a use of both 'Ouch!' and 'I'm in pain' you can infer *that the speaker is in pain*. He doesn't take this to entail that they have the same meaning or use-conditions. This is made clear in the following forceful passage with which he concludes the discussion of the informational equivalence of 'Ouch' and 'I'm in pain':

"If I am correct, it is easy to see why somebody might mistake this simple semantic fact, the informational equivalence of the two expressions, for some kind of profound epistemological insight into the functioning of language and come to the conclusion, a conclusion that, to me, is simply

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[2] Note that this example demonstrates that talk of use-conditions and talk of sincerity-conditions is not equivalent. The former is the most basic semantic notion on this view, the latter is a derivative, and partly non-semantic notion. In some cases like 'Ouch!' they coincide. However, in other cases like 'Oops!' they don't. Kaplan suggests that its use-condition is *factive*, to be in it the speaker has to have observed something that is, in fact, a mishap (Kaplan MS). However, for the speaker's utterance to be sincere they just have to *believe* that they observed a mishap.

[3] I will take the use-conditions of declaratives to consist of the speaker's *judgment* to preserve maximum similarity to what Schwartz says (compare Hanks 2015). However, all that matters here is that they entail truth-conditions. You could alternatively take them to consist just of the fact that the speaker is in pain (Alston 2000), the speaker's *believing* that they're in pain (Lewis 1975), or of their merely *entertaining* the proposition that they're in pain (Soames 2010). All of these variations establish the relevant difference between an expressive and a declarative.

perverse, that the sentence "I am in pain" is actually synonymous with the word "ouch", and that since "ouch" is so plainly an expressive, "I am in pain" must likewise be an expressive, and must therefore attribute no property to any subject." (Kaplan MS: 11)

To repeat, on Kaplan's view 'Ouch!' is an expressive and for expressing pain. In contrast, 'I'm in pain' is a declarative and for attributing the property of pain to yourself. There's a difference in meaning and on the assumption that meaning = use-conditions, this is a difference in use-conditions. And this difference in use-conditions is what *makes* the former an expressive and the latter a declarative.[4]

      The above story undermines Schwartz's attempt to sidestep the basic problem. On the received view, the difference in use-conditions of our two target sentences is something like the following:

(5) [['Thank you!]]$_{UC}$ = there is a y such that s addresses y and s is grateful

(6) [['Gratitude is appropriate to you]]$_{UC}$ = there is a y such that s addresses y and *judges* that gratitude is appropriate to y

In contrast, on Schwartz's view we just get:

(7) [['Thank you!]]$_{UC}$ = there is a y such that s addresses y and *judges* that gratitude is appropriate to y

(8) [['Gratitude is appropriate to you]]$_{UC}$ = there is a y such that s addresses y and *judges* that gratitude is appropriate to y

That makes (7) and (8) indistinguishable and the basic problem remains. And given the above, correct way of understanding Kaplan's view, there is no other way to recover the semantic difference between the expressions than as a difference in use-conditions.

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[4] Kaplan also puts the claim of carrying the same semantic information or informational equivalence in terms of the set of contexts an expression is descriptively vs. expressively correctly used. The set of contexts in which 'I'm in pain' and 'Ouch!' are correct coincide – they're the ones where the speaker is in pain. However, the big point Kaplan is making is that carrying the same semantic information is not sufficient for *synonymy*. The way the information is encoded, descriptively vs. expressively, matters as well. In other words, the difference in descriptive vs. expressive correctness matters for meaning. And this is understood in terms of the two expressions having different use-conditions. Thanks to an anonymous referee for pressing me to clarify this.

2. Mismatch Arguments

Schwartz's arguments against the received view focus on cases where the speaker's feelings of gratitude don't match with their judgments about whether a grateful response is appropriate. Consider Samuel who gets helped by a stranger at an airport, but is too flustered to feel grateful, though he manages to say 'Thank you!'. He does believe, however, that a grateful response is appropriate. Or consider Joslyn who has made some sort of a mistake in a competitive situation that could get her disqualified, but gets helped by her fiercest competitive rival. She is too resentful to feel gratitude, though she manages to say the words. She does, however, again, believe that a grateful response is appropriate. Is something wrong about Sam and Jos's language use? Are they sincere or insincere? The received view says that the speakers are not in the use-conditions and are therefore making a sort of a linguistic mistake. Schwartz thinks this is implausible and that the speakers are sincere.

The first thing to say about these sorts of cases is that our intuitions about them are bound to be messy and this is amplified by using insincerity as the relevant metric. When you use 'Ouch!' speaking literally (e. g. non-metaphorically) while not in pain then you're not in the use-conditions and are also insincere. However, the only situations where you would do this is when you're trying to *intentionally deceive* someone into thinking that you're in pain. Similarly, when you say that you've been tested for COVID while knowing that you haven't, you're lying. At the minimum you're *knowingly* not in the use-condition, even if your goals are not deceptive. But things are quite different in Sam's and Jos's cases. On the received view they're lacking the relevant mental state, and thus are not in the use-conditions. But there is at least some resistance to calling Sam insincere, since he is neither deceptive nor knowingly not in the use-condition. Things are a bit trickier in Jos's case, since even though she isn't deceptive, she is perhaps knowingly not in the use-condition, against her own best judgment. But in her case I think there's also no resistance to thinking she's insincere.

I think the relevant question from the point of view of discussing the meaning of 'Thank you!' is whether there's anything wrong with Sam's and Jos's language use, whether they're making a linguistic mistake. Given the above qualifications, I think it's natural to think that something is wrong about their language use. On the received view we can say that they're not in the use-conditions and are therefore making a linguistic mistake. But, at best, only Jos is insincere. In contrast, Schwartz is forced to say that everything is completely fine with their linguistic uses and they are both sincere. This verdict that nothing is going wrong seems false.

Take Schwartz's further case of Alison who is in an abusive relationship and when their partner refrains from haranguing them further, she is grateful and says 'Thank you!' while judging that she shouldn't feel this way. Is something wrong with her use, is she insincere? My strong intuition is that there's absolutely nothing wrong at all as far as her language use and she's completely sincere. The problem is just that she feels what she thinks she shouldn't.

At the minimum, I think this shows that Schwartz's intuitive arguments against the received view do not establish his desired conclusion. I've also pointed out that some of them seem to count against his own view.

3. 'Thank you!' as an Effective

Consider executive assistant Jolene who expects a nice gift from her boss in appreciation of her efforts, but receives a succulent like everyone else. She still manages to go through the motions and say 'Thank you!' so as not to insult her boss, despite not being grateful nor judging that a grateful response is appropriate. We can all agree that she's being insincere.

On the received view we have a simple story to tell about what's going on here. Compare, for a moment 'Hello!'. It is a situational because it has the following use-conditions:

(9) $[[\text{'Hello!'}]]_{UC}$ = there is a y such that s addresses y and s is meeting y

However, when one uses 'Hello!', a particular sort of social status comes into being, namely, the addressee is greeted. The use of 'Hello!' with its meaning while addressing someone suffices to create this status. Similarly, when you use 'Thank you!' while addressing someone, a particular social status comes into being, namely, the addressee is thanked. This happens whether or not the speaker was in the use-conditions or was sincere. An insincere thanks is like an insincere assertion or promise; insincere, but still a thanks, assertion, or a promise. And this is exactly what's going on in Jolene's case.

Now, there is no reason why Schwartz couldn't tell the exactly parallel story, just substituting his proposed use-conditions. However, he seems to think that what we have here are two different accounts of the meaning of 'Thank you!', one as an expressive and the other as an effective. This makes him worry that the two accounts are inconsistent and he addresses this by spelling it out in terms of indirect speech acts. Following Searle, we can say that even

though the meaning of 'Can you open the door?' is an interrogative and therefore semantically for asking, it is usually used instead to perform the illocutionary act of requesting that the addressee open the door. Schwartz wants to say the same thing about Jolene's use of 'Thank you!': even though it's an expressive it is indirectly used as an effective.

This story has several problems. First, suppose the two accounts really were two different accounts of the meaning of 'Thank you!'. Then it's unclear how the indirect speech act story would help since on that story, it is not a matter of the *meaning* of 'Can you open the door?' that it is normally used to request, but general pragmatic factors. But more importantly, it's a mistake to think that the two accounts are both accounts of the meaning of the phrase and at all in tension in the first place. 'Thank you!' is an expressive, but its use with meaning while addressing someone creates a particular sort of social status, that the addressee is thanked. The latter fact is not a semantic, but a straightforwardly social one.

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