



**Universität
Zürich** ^{UZH}

Institute of Philosophy

Doctoral Program "Philosophy – Language, Mind and Practice"

Master Class

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**Meaning, Interpretation,
and Intention**

30th September – 1st October, 2016

Synopsis

Among the things we interpret are utterances, inscriptions, poems, laws, traffic signs, paintings, polls, winks, frowns, animal calls, and changes in such things as seismic activity, temperature, pressure, rainfall, CO₂ levels, interest rates, and consumer spending. Virtually all theoretical discussions of interpretation are founded on the same idea: to *interpret* something is to seek or postulate *meaning* in it; to provide an *interpretation* of something is to specify its *meaning* or *what it means*. The first two aims of the seminar are (i) to establish what we can expect from particular theories of meaning and interpretation and (ii) to examine the prospects of providing a *general* but substantive account of what interpretation *is*. Drawing on the work of Paul Grice, it is often suggested that some interpretation concerns *natural* meaning, the sort described by sentences such as (1a) and (1b), while some concerns *non-natural* meaning, the sort described by sentences such as (2a) and (2b)

- (1) a. The increase in CO₂ levels *means* there will be a rise in temperature
b. These rings mean the tree is more than fifty years old.
- (2) a. By uttering 'I'm tired', Sue *means* that she is tired
b. I know what the German sentence Der Schnee is Weiss *means*.

Non-natural meaning is meant to be grounded in *intention* whereas natural meaning is meant to be grounded in *causal explanation*. The next two aims of the seminar are (iii) to establish the precise roles of intention, inference, and context in theories of non-natural meaning—particularly theories of what speakers *mean* and what they *say*, drawing upon my own work and earlier work by Sperber and Wilson—and (iv) to understand how we should analyze animal communication, which provides examples of meaning that are neither natural nor non-natural by Grice's criteria, as is often noted. A final aim is (v) to establish the extent to which interpreting *abstract artifacts* such as statues constitutions, contracts, and treaties, and also *material artefacts* such as archaeological finds involves seeking the intentions of those who produced them.

It will be well worth having a copy of Paul Grice's *Studies in the Way of Words*, Harvard University Press, 1989.

Programme

Friday, 30th September, 2016

9:30 – 12:00	Meaning and Interpretation
13:30 – 16:00	Meaning and Intention
16:30 – 19:00	Pragmatic Theory

Saturday, 1st October, 2016

9:30 – 12:00	Determining Meaning
13:30 – 16:00	Natural and Non-natural Meaning
16:30 – 18:30	Legal Interpretation

Registration: phd@philos.uzh.ch

Details: <http://www.philosophie.uzh.ch/doktorat/meisterkurse.html>

Venue: Philosophisches Seminar, Zürichbergstrasse 43, 8044 Zürich

Room: ZUP-U-8

No fees apply, but please note that participants are expected to have done the reading of the texts. PhD students at the UZH are required to book the module in order to get credit points.

Readings

Friday, 30th September, 2016

Meaning and Interpretation

Neale, S.: 'Meaning and Interpretation', in Edmonds, D. and Warburton, N. (eds.): *Philosophy Bites Again*. OUP, 2015, pp. 240–264.

Dennett, D.: 'The Interpretation of Texts, People and Other Artifacts', in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 50, 1990, pp. 177–194.

Lamraque, P.: 'Objects of Interpretation', in *Metaphilosophy* 31 1/2, 2000, pp. 96–124.

Meaning and Intention

Neale, S.: 'Silent Reference', Section 2, in Ostertag, G. (ed.): *Meanings and Other Things: Essays in Honor of Stephen Schiffer*. OUP, 2016, in press, pp. 229–342.

Grice, H. P.: 'Meaning', in *Philosophical Review* 66, 1957 pp. 377–88.

Neale, S.: 'Silent Reference', Section 5 and Sections 10.1 and 10.2.

Pragmatic Theory

Grice, H. P.: 'Logic and Conversation', in Cole, P. (ed.): *Syntax and Semantics, Vol. 3: Speech Acts*, New York: Academic Press. 41–58.

Wilson, D. and Sperber, D.: 'Truthfulness and Relevance', in *Mind* 111, 2002, pp. 583–632.

Wilson, D. and Sperber, D.: 'Beyond Speaker Meaning', in *Croatian Journal of Philosophy* 15, 2015, pp. 117–150.

Saturday, 1st October, 2016

Determining Meaning

Neale, S.: 'Silent Reference'. Section 7.

Natural and Non-natural Meaning

Grice, H. P.: 'Meaning Revisited', in Smith, N.V. (ed.): *Mutual Knowledge*, Academic Press, 1982, pp. 223–243.

Denkel, A.: 'Natural Meaning'. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 70, 3, 1992, pp. 296–306.

Neale, S.: 'Beyond Natural and Non-natural Meaning', in *Croatian Journal of Philosophy*, forthcoming.

Legal Interpretation

Scalia, A.: *A Matter of Interpretation*, Princeton 1997, pp. 3–48.

Dworkin, R.: Comment, in *A Matter of Interpretation*, Princeton 1997, pp. 115–127.

Scalia, R.: Reply, in *A Matter of Interpretation*, Princeton 1997, pp. 144–149.