

TRUTH CONDITIONS VS. USE CONDITIONS (A STUDY ON THE UTILITY OF PRAGMATICS)

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1. *Truth-Conditions vs. Use-Conditions*

Any adequate theory of language must come to terms with the difference between semantics and pragmatics by acknowledging the crucial distinction between use-conditions and truth-conditions. The use-conditions encompass *the user-oriented circumstances in which a sentence is appropriately and warrantably assertable by those who employ the particular language* in which it figures. The truth-conditions, by contrast, detail *the reality-oriented circumstances that must obtain for the claim that is staked to be true*. The former provide the *operational criteria* for making the assertion at issue, the latter indicate the entire range of the *objective circumstances* that must obtain for the statement is to be made *correctly* (i.e., truly)—including the whole gamut of inferential consequences that must be taken to follow from its assertion.

The truth conditions look to the circumstances which have to obtain for a statement to be true—as, for example, “There are no witches” coordinates with a world without witches. On this basis, any claim whatever that is logically entailed by a given contention will figure among its truth conditions. For suppose that the consequence *C* follows inferentially from the statement *S*: “*S* entails *C*.” Then, of course, not-*C* would (by hypothesis) entail that not-*S*, so that the obtaining of *C* would *ipso facto* be comprised among the truth-conditions of *S*. The truth conditions of a statement accordingly incorporates the sum-total of what must be the case for that initial statement to be true.

By contrast, the use-conditions of a language comprise the *authorizing criteria for making the assertions at issue* by specifying the sorts of cognitive or epistemic circumstances that qualify a statement as being made *appropriately* (i.e., warrantably), the circumstances under which the staking of those claims by a language user are in order—including what sorts of

further circumstances would abrogate such entitlements.¹ They encompass not only the evidential situation but also the general setting of the communicative circumstances in which a particular assertion is validated as appropriate within the setting of the communicative practice at issue. Accordingly, communication policy plays the pivotal role in this context. For while truth conditions deal with the objective facts, use conditions deal with the linguistic properties.

Use conditions look to the evidential situations in which that statement can appropriately be claimed to obtain—as is certainly the case in the present state of general knowledge about witchcraft and its ways. When I see what looks to be an apple in the grocer's bin next to a label reading "Fresh Macintoshes, 30¢ per pound," I quite appropriately take the *use* conditions for the claim "Those objects are apples" to be fully and amply satisfied. But, of course, *truth* conditions are something else again, seeing that they involve a vast deal more—to wit, that those objects have apple cores at their middle rather than sand; that they grew on apple trees rather than being synthesized in an apple-replicator; that they are not strangely deformed pears of some sort, etc.

And, of course, what is at issue with truth conditions is something far above and beyond the vastly more modest matter of use conditions. If the circumstances are such that a proposition's *truth* conditions are not satisfied, then this proposition is false. But if the circumstances are such that a proposition's *use* conditions are not satisfied, then this proposition is not necessarily false, but merely such that its assertion is inappropriate or unwarranted. No secure inference about its truth can be made one way or the other. The failure here is not an error of commission but an error of omission—of not properly equipping one's claim with an appropriate grounding. When the use-conditions are satisfied in the context of a speaker's claim we might well wind up saying that the speaker had spoken *falsely* but not that the speaker had spoken *inappropriately*, let alone "in reckless disregard to the truth."

To be sure, it would be very mistaken to think that the conditions of use or assertability as consisting in explicitly formalized rules alone. In general, what is at issue is not, strictly speaking, a matter of *rules* at all. The use-conventions at issue are not always formulated and codified; doubtless they are not fully codifiable, any more than are the "rules" for hitting a forehand in tennis. What is at issue is a matter of the characterizing conditions of a

¹ To be sure, inferential relationships obtain either way—there are both *truth*-implications and *use*-implications. The latter gives rise to what H. G. Grice called "conversational implicatures." See his posthumous *Studies in the Ways of Words* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

practice, of how-to-do-it guidelines, of the skills and tricks of the linguistic trade of what is learned largely through observation, imitation, and habituation, rather than through mastery of and adherence to explicitly specifiable rules. (There are, obviously, some things we must be able to do without using rules—following rules, for example, since otherwise we would be in the paradoxical situation of needing rules to govern the use of rules.) Language users can observe the proprieties without mastering them in a codified form.

2. The "Logic" of Use-Conditions: Pragmatics vs. Semantics

As the preceding considerations indicate, satisfaction of the conventions of use or assertability emphatically does *not* automatically assure the truth of the statements at issue. These conditions simply determine the appropriateness (the justifiability of defensibility) of making these statements—the warrant, in context, for staking the claims at issue. And truth always transcends warrant: objective statements always have a content that asserts more than what the information-in-hand assures—and ever could assure given our evidence's finitude and confinement to the past-&-present. It is therefore perfectly possible that—even when some claim satisfies all the use-conditions of some claim are met things may nevertheless so eventuate that this duly authorized statement will ultimately have to be withdrawn not (*ex hypothesi*) as having been inappropriate but rather as having unfortunately turned out to be incorrect.

The employment of some symbolism will help to clarify further the characteristic contentual-gap that opens up between use-conditions and truth-conditions:

$u(S, P)$ = "the informative situation S satisfies the use-conditions for the claim P "

$t(S, P)$ = "the informative situation S satisfies the truth-conditions for the claim P "

There is a fundamental asymmetry here. We do not have $t(S, P)$ unless *all* of P 's truth conditions are satisfied in the situation S . On the other hand $u(S, P)$ demands no more than that *some* set of appropriately sufficient assertability conditions for P is satisfied in the situation S .

When the truth conditions of a statement are satisfied, any individual sufficiently apprised of this fact will be in a position to stake the claim at issue, through sufficiency here stops well short of a perfected completeness. Not, to be sure, inevitably, but certainly by and large and in the ordinary

course of things $t(S, P)$ may be presumed to carry $u(S, P)$ with it, so that $t(S, P) \rightarrow u(S, P)$, usually at any rate. (If the cat actually *is* on the mat, a normal observer would, in ordinary circumstances, see it to be there, etc.) In normal epistemic circumstances, the situations satisfying the use-conditions thus turn out to be a subset of those satisfying the truth-conditions.

Thus the transition from t to u is generally feasible. But the converse thesis is distinctly problematic. For as we have seen, the involvements of $t(S, P)$ generally go well beyond those of $u(S, P)$. Things which look like apples often fail to be apples — wax fruit, for example. In practice we unhesitatingly (and appropriately) claim that $t(S, P)$ whenever $u(S, P)$ has been determined to obtain, acting on the *presumption* that when the circumstances are such that we are duly authorized (given the rules of language) to assert the P , then P is indeed true. We take this stance because with most of the types of objective statements that we ordinarily make a satisfaction of the use-conditions carries satisfaction of the truth-conditions in its wake: given $u(S, P)$ it becomes highly probable that $t(S, P)$. Probability rides to the rescue. The warranting conditions for “the cat is on the mat” must—given how things work in the world—ordinarily and in most cases assure the satisfaction of the truth conditions.²

At this point the pragmatics of linguistic praxis comes upon the scene. The principle that is at issue here, namely

If $(\exists S)[S \ \& \ u(S, P)]$, then P

represents a merely *practical* commitment, rather than an actual entailment on grounds of theoretical general principles. In this respect it is crucially different from

If $(\exists S)[S \ \& \ t(S, P)]$, then P

which is indeed a logico-conceptual truth given what is at issue with $t(S, P)$. It should, accordingly, be noted that the preceding thesis that P follows from the combination of S and $u(S, P)$ is part of the “practical politics” of verbal communication. It does not inhere in a logico-conceptual necessitation of the form $[u(S, P) \ \& \ S] \rightarrow P$. The working authorization to treat P as true neither assumes nor presupposes a circumstantial *demonstration* of P ’s truth.

Accordingly, what is at issue in the transition from u -satisfaction to t -satisfaction is, at best, an inferential step authorized by the operative condi-

² The hypothetical element is crucial here. If it were appropriate to call someone a witch (which it never is) then it would be true that she could perform magic (which she cannot).

tions of language use —an implication that obtains on “practical” rather than “theoretical” grounds. And so while we recognize, *in abstracto*, that it is by no means the case that this transition is legitimate, we proceed *in concreto* as though this were so. Our policy of language-use is such that we take the truth-conditions and the use-conditions of statement as ordinarily *de facto* coordinated, and not as merely correlated in a statistical manner. In effect we operate with a *substantive* and *factual* assumption that “coordinates” the criteria for applying our concepts with the inferential consequences that—given the meaning of these concepts—ensue upon their application.

It is useful to contrast three theses:

- (1) Whenever both S and $u(S, P)$, then P .
- (2) Generally (almost always) when both S and $u(S, P)$, then P .
- (3) Whenever we determine both S and $u(S, P)$, then we shall take ourselves to be authorized to assert P .

What we have with use-conditions is a *practical policy* of presumption along the lines of (3) that is warranted by a subscription to the weak generalization (2). Knowing full well that (1) is in general false, we nevertheless proceed as though it were true, taking comfort in the (2)-assured circumstances that we will only occasionally go wrong on this basis. We allow the use-conditions to do duty for truth conditions, seeing the negativity of a risk of error is here offset by the communicative advantages of being able to stake P -claims.

3. *Semantics, Pragmatics and the Issue of Meaning*

The truth-conditions of a statement are a matter of the *Semantics* of a language; the use-conditions are a matter of what has come to be called its *pragmatics*. These use-conditions are intrinsic components of the language—a part of what children learn about the use of their native tongue “at mother’s knee.” Truth-conditions do not have a monopoly on “meaning”—this concept is broad enough to encompass both sorts of conditions. After all, the use-conditions and their correlative imputational ground-rules are every bit as much an aspect of the “meaning” of our words as are the truth conditions. These two aspects of “meaning” (*viz.* consequences via truth-condition and antecedents via warranting or use-conditions) stand in a symbiotic intertwining. For a crucial part of learning what a word *means* is to learn how it is *used*—i.e., to get a working grasp of the types of conditions and circumstances under which its use in certain ways is *appropriate*.

And here it is necessary to realize that this involves an "inductive" component—and implicit view of "the way in which things work in the world."³

"But surely truth conditions are the crucial thing for meaning? Surely you don't really know what a statement means if you don't know fully and exactly what follows from it." This seems altogether plausible—but only because we theorists are so deeply invested in the "logical" (rather than "practical") sense of meaning. Semantics has dominated over pragmatics in recent language studies. But both are needed. Without access to the truth-conditions of a statement we would not know exactly what it claims; without access to its use-conditions, we would not know when it is actually in order to stake this claim. Neither aspect is dispensable.

And the critical fact is that "meaning" is a comprehensive concept that embraces both semantical and pragmatic issues. To gain an adequate grasp of a language we must learn *both* what follows from its statements and what authorizes them—what conditions allow us to take them to be in order. Any exclusivistic doctrine along the lines of "meaning is use" or "meaning is a matter of truth conditions" is one-sided, dogmatic, and inappropriate in its claim to exclusiveness.

Use conditions accordingly reflect a practical policy of presumption. The legitimation of the practical policy at work here is ultimately the matter of convenience. As is generally the case with practical policies, the process is at bottom a matter of cost-benefit calculations. Language simply could not develop as an effective instrument of communication (information transmission) if the *u-to-t* transition were not generally feasible.⁴

This idea of such presumptive "taking" is a crucial aspect of our language-deploying discursive practice. For one thing it is the pivot point for the objectivity of language use—for its intensionality (with an *S*) in point of application to real-world objects. The actual starting point may be no more than "I take myself to be seeing an apple." But we readily go beyond this idea to "I take it to be an apple that I see," and then move beyond this thought to *Claim*: "I see an apple." And these transitions—this move from experiential subjectivity to our objective and factual claims—find their warrant in the established principles and practices of language use, that is, in these "use rules" of language. It is not that the apple is somehow *given* to us in "brute experience." (Wilfrid Sellars' critique of "The Myth of the Given" is perfectly in order.) But beyond that mythological *given*

³ Cf. the author's *The Primacy of Practice* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1973), pp. 107-123.

⁴ Some other issues relevant to the present deliberations are discussed in Chapter One ("Meaning and Assertability") of the author's *Empirical Inquiry* (Totowa NJ: Rowman & Littlefield, 1982).

there lies the reality of what is putatively *taken* by us: the reality of what we take to be so subject to the established use rules of linguistic policy and praxis. The justification of those use-rules certainly does not lie in observational evidentiality with respect to the “given,” seeing that we simply cannot deploy any experience-transcending “observation” to reach behind experience to the subexperiential reality behind what we had experienced. Rather, than being evidential in *this* sort of way, the justification of those use rules is *pragmatic*. It lies, that is to say, in considerations of utility—in the effectiveness with which they enable us to realize the relevant purposes of the context, which in this linguistic case comes to the guidance of our own actions and the concerting of those actions through communication with others.

4. *Duality Roots in the Cognitive Opacity of Real Things*

It lies in the very nature of things that use conditions must inevitably differ substantially from truth conditions where statements of objective matter of fact are at issue. However, in using language to communicate about the world, we have no choice but to settle in practice for letting $u(S, P)$ do duty for $t(S, P)$.

The crucial fact is that use-conditions have to be experientially manageable and with use-conditions we have to be in a position to attain actual entitlement. But truth-conditions, by contrast, are always experience-transcendent where matters of objective fact are at issue. Here we can never be in a position to claim that the information at our disposal is all that there is to it. Only with purely subjective claims —“I have a headache”; “I am under the impression that that is a cat”; “It displeases me that he should dislike her” —will use and truth conditions come into convergence.

Let us consider the situation more closely.

Use conditions will have to operate within the orbit of the discernible features of our experience. But of course truth conditions in the case of matters of objective fact have to go far beyond this. To begin with, it is clear that, as we standardly think about things within the conceptual framework of our fact-oriented thought and discourse, *any* real physical object has more facets than it will ever actually manifest in experience. For every objective property of a real thing has consequences of a dispositional character and these are never surveyable *in toto* because the dispositions which particular concrete things inevitably have endow them with an in-

finitistic aspect that cannot be comprehended within experience.⁵ This desk, for example, has a limitless manifold of phenomenal features of the type: "having a certain appearance from a particular point of view." It is perfectly clear that most of these will never be actualized in experience. Moreover, a thing *is* what it *does*: entity and lawfulness are coordinated correlates—a good Kantian point. And this fact that real things involve lawful comportment means that the finitude of experience precludes any prospect of the *exhaustive* manifestation of the descriptive facets of any real things.⁶

The world's concrete furnishings not only have more characterizing properties than they ever will overtly manifest, but they have more than they possibly can ever manifest. This is so because the dispositional properties of things always involve what might be characterized as *mutually preemptive* conditions of realization. A cube of sugar, for example, must as such have the dispositional property of reacting in a particular way if subjected to a temperature of 10,000°C and of reaching in a certain way if emplaced for one hundred hours in a large, turbulent body of water. But if either of these conditions is ever realized, it will destroy the lump of sugar as a lump of sugar, and thus block the prospect of *its* ever bringing the other property to manifestation. The perfectly possible realization of various dispositions may fail to be mutually *Compossible*, and so the dispositional properties of a thing cannot ever be manifested completely—not just in practice, but in principle. Our objective claims about real things always commit us to more than we can actually ever determine about them.

The very concepts at issue—namely "experience" and "manifestation"—are such that we can only ever *experience* those features of a real thing that

⁵ To be sure, *abstract* things, such as colors or numbers, will not have dispositional properties. For being divisible by four is not a *dispositional* of sixteen. Plato got the matter right in Book VII of the *Republic*. In the realm of *abstracta*, such as those of mathematics, there are not genuine *processes*—and process is a requisite of dispositions. Of course, there may be dispositional truths in which numbers (or colors, etc.) figure that do not issue in any dispositional properties of these numbers (or colors, etc.) themselves—a truth, for example, such as my predilection for odd numbers. But if a truth (or supposed truth) does no more than to convey how someone *thinks* about a thing, then it does not indicate any property of the thing itself. In any case, however, the subsequent discussion will focus on *realia* in contrast to *fictionalia* and *concreta* in contrast to *abstracta*. (Fictional things, however, *can* have dispositions: Sherlock Holmes was addicted to cocaine, for example. Their difference from *realia* is dealt with below).

⁶ This aspect of objectivity was justly stressed in the "Second Analogy" of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, though his discussion rests on ideas already contemplated by Leibniz, *Philosophische Schriften*, edited by C. I. Gerhardt Vol. VII (Berlin: Wiedmann, 1890), pp. 319 ff.

it actually *manifests*. But the preceding considerations show that real things always have more experientially manifestable properties than they can ever actually manifest in experience. The experienced portion of a thing is like the part of the iceberg that show above water. All real things are necessarily thought of as having hidden depths that extend beyond the limits, not only of experience, but also of experientiability. To say of something that it is an apple or a stone or a tree is to become committed to claims about it that go beyond the data we have—and even beyond those which we can, in the nature of things, ever actually acquire. The “meaning” inherent in the assertoric commitments of our factual statements is never exhausted by its verification. Real things are cognitively opaque—we cannot see to the bottom of them. Our knowledge of such things can thus become more *extensive* without thereby becoming more *complete*.

In this regard, however, real things differ in an interesting and important way from their fictional cousins. To make this difference plain, it is useful to distinguish between two types of information about a thing, namely that which is *generic* and that which is not. Generic information tells about those features of a thing which it has in common with everything else of its kind of type. For example, a particular snowflake will share with all others certain facts about its structure, its hexagonal form, its chemical composition, its melting point, etc. On the other hand, it will also have various properties which it does not share with other member of its own “lowest species” in the classificatory order—its particular shape, for example, or the angular momentum of its descent. These are its non-generic features.

Now a key fact about *fictional* particulars is that they are of finite cognitive depth. In discoursing about them we shall ultimately run out of steam as regards their non-generic features. A point will always be reached when on cannot say anything further that is characteristically new about them—presenting non-generic information that is not inferentially implicit in what has already been said. New *generic* information can, of course, always be forthcoming through the progress of science. When we learn more about cola-in-general then we know more about coal in Sherlock Holmes’ grate. But the finiteness of their cognitive depth means that the presentation of ampliatively novel *non-generic* information must by the very nature of the case come to a stop when fictional things are at issue. The finiteness of our descriptive resources means that descriptive detail must come to an end of the road here.

With *real* things, on the other hand, there is no reason of principle why the provision of non-generically idiosyncratic information need ever terminate. On the contrary, we have every reason to presume these things to be cognitively inexhaustible. A precommitment to description-transcending features—no matter how far description is pushed—is essential to our conception of a real thing. Something whose character was exhaustible by lin-

guistic characterization would thereby be marked as fictional rather than real.⁷

And much the same story holds when our concern is not with physical things, but with *types* of such things. To say that something is copper or magnetic is to say more than that it has the properties we think copper or magnetic things have, and to say more than that it meets our test conditions for being copper (or being magnetic). It is to say that this thing *is* copper or magnetic. And this is an issue regarding which we are prepared at least to contemplate the theoretical prospect that we have got it wrong. For the step from use conditions to truth conditions in these matters of objective fact, always involves us in an inductive leap.

5. *The Inductive Aspect*

Consider the following course of reasoning:

It looks like a duck
It quacks like a duck
It waddles like a duck

Therefore: It is a duck

This reasoning is clearly not deductively valid. (Mechanical “ducks” can do all those things as well.) Nor is it enthymematically valid. For any premisses we might add that actually manage to close the deductive gap fully and completely—“Whatever looks, quacks, and waddles like a duck will actually *be* a duck,” for example—will simply not be true. And nothing that we can add by way of epistemically *available* truth will close the deductive gap. Such tenability as the argument has it obtains from a certain *practical policy*, namely: *As long as no counterindications come to light, to treat as a duck anything that (sufficiently) behaves like one.* And this is a *praxis* rather than a factual claim of some sort. We know full well that it is false to claim “Whatever looks, quacks, and waddles like a duck, will actually be a duck.” But in ordinary circumstances (in the absence of visible counter indications) we feel free to implement the policy at issue with an

⁷ This also explains why the dispute over mathematical realism (Platonism) has little bearing on the issue of physical realism. Mathematical entities are akin to fictional entities in this—that we can only say about them what we can extract by deductive means from what we have explicitly put into their defining characterization. These abstract entities do not have non-generic properties since each is a “lowest species” unto itself.

inferential leap, not because in doing so we cannot possibly go wrong, but rather because we will generally go right.

The experience-ampliating reliance that we place on use conditions is simply part and parcel of an inductive process built into the use of language as our instrumentality for communicating with one another about the world we live in. The validation of these highly presumption-predicated communicative resources is ultimately pragmatic rather than logico-semantical in nature. Cognitive utility is the crux here.

Without reliance on use conditions as distinct from truth conditions, linguistic communication becomes infeasible. And without our commitment to a fundamentally inductive stance, use conditions are impracticable. For in no other way can the gap between the warrant for our objective assertions and their assertoric context be bridged over.

6. *Advantages of a Use-Conditional approach to Meaning*

There are some contexts of linguistic communication where use conditions become paramount exactly because the issue of truth as such retreats into the background. Contexts where no statement-making is at issue—questions and commands, for example—afford a prime illustration. Truth as such will not come into it here, but questions of appropriateness and correctness of usage certainly remain. And counterfactual conditionals also constitute a case in point. Consider, for example, the somewhat problematic conditional: “If Napoleon had won at Waterloo, he would still have lost in the end by overreaching himself.”⁸ It is not just hard to say whether this conditional contention is true; it is distinctly problematic if the characterization of truth is even applicable here. And the reason is simple: truth as a semantical concept turns on how matters actually stand in the real world—factuality is in some manner or other a matter of *adaequatio ad rem*. But counterfactuals will—as they become fanciful enough—increasingly leave their real-world connections behind. In many contexts—questions, commands, and counterfactual conditionalization prominent among them—there are linguistic properties to be observed and communicative purposes to be served even though semantics of truth conditions does not naturally come into play here. For with communicative resources of this nature, where the linkage of truth as such is tenuous, a truth conditional analysis as standardly practiced would involve a commerce with merely

⁸ “If ‘through’ were spelled ‘thru’ it would have four letters” is less problematic but represents an extreme case. On these issues see the author’s “Counterfactuals in Pragmatic Perspective,” *The Review of Metaphysics*, vol. 50 (1996), pp. 35-61.

possible worlds. The utility of a pragmatical (use-conditional) rather than a semantical (truth-conditional) approach to meaning analysis is thus particularly manifest in non-declarative contexts such as those at issue with questions, commands, and suppositions.

The shortcoming of the currently fashionable possible-worlds approach to the semantics is that it is predicated on some rather problematic presumptions. The beauty of a standard mechanism—a typewriter, say, or an electronic computer—is that its functioning is deterministic. Its *modus operandi* is fixed: when one provides particular inputs it responds in certain definite ways. It is accordingly supposition-definite: if you suppose certain things to be done, it will respond in definite and (in principle) predictable ways. But, of course, not *all* systems are not like that: people presumably not, for example, and the world as a whole certainly not. Here you simply cannot, in general, say “what would happen if”—and not just because you lack *available* information but because the system has not as yet made up its mind how to respond. One thus has no clue as to what possible worlds we associate with certain hypothetical changes in this actual one. There simply is not workable way of constructing alternative possible worlds—even only in hypothesis.⁹

Even if we refrain from the excesses of possible-world realism¹⁰ and view possible worlds epistemically, as mere methodological thought-tools, we are still confronted by something deeply problematic. For once we start meddling with the actual law structure of the world we no longer really have a clue how to proceed. If electromagnetic radiation propagated at the speed of light, how would we have to readjust cosmology? Heaven only knows! (Leibniz had the right idea here.) We can certainly sometimes say what particular consequences would follow from a fact-contravening law hypothesis. (If the law of gravitation were an inverse cube law, their significantly lesser weight would prevent the evolution of larger dinosaurs.) But we could not redesign the entire world—many issues would have to be left unresolved. In a well-designed system of geometry, the axioms are independent—each can be changed without affecting the rest. But we have little if any knowledge about the dependency relationships of natural laws, and if

⁹ To question the appropriateness of *possible worlds* is not automatically to gainsay the semantical utility of *scenarios* in semantical analysis—i.e., fictions that characterizes possible courses of events in ways that are fragmentary and incomplete in their overall bearing. Compare for example, the case on the analysis of imperatives in the author's *The Logic of Commands* (London: Routledge, 1969). This general approach was systematized in the author's *A Theory of Possibility* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975).

¹⁰ See David Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986).

we adopt an hypothesis to change one of them we cannot really say what impact this will have on the rest.

Unlike truth-conditional analysis of at any rate the *standard* sort, which rely on the machinery of possible worlds, use-conditional analysis can dispense with this eminently problematic resource. And just herein lies one of their most substantial advantages. For possible worlds themselves involve such major problems that to employ them to analyze conditionals, questions, and imperatives is to explain the obscure in terms of what is yet more so. In this area there is much to be said for an analysis of meaning in pragmatic terms via the deployment of use conditions.

To be sure, such an approach takes us upon the field of the turf battle between formal and informal logic. The matters of abstract possibility at issue with truth conditions belong to formal logic; those of concrete feasibility at issue with use conditions clearly belong to informal logic. The fact that both are inextricably interrelated in matters of meaning—that meaning analysis has a formal (semantic) and an informal (pragmatic) dimension that are inseparably interrelated—means that there is a symbiotic interconnection here that permits neither side to claim unconditional priority over the other. Each of them affords a perfectly proper resource that is available for use where and as the circumstances of the situation may indicate, with one approach more effective in some contexts and the other approach in others.