The Mind-Body Problem and Brandom's Analytic Pragmatism

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Abstract. I propose to solve the hard problem in the philosophy of mind by means of Brandom's notion of the pragmatically mediated semantic relation. The explanatory gap between a phenomenal concept and the corresponding theoretical concept is a gap in the pragmatically mediated semantic relation between them. It is closed if we do not neglect the pragmatics.

1 Introduction

In the second section, I will formulate the hard problem. In the third section, I will describe a pragmatic approach to the problem and propose to replace the classical non-normative physicalism/naturalism with a normative physicalism/naturalism of Wittgensteinian language games. In subsection 3.1, I will give a definition of a normative naturalism. In subsection 3.2, I will make some suggestions concerning an analytic interpretation of the second philosophy of Wittgenstein. In the fourth section, I will propose a solution to the hard problem within Brandom's analytic pragmatism by using the notion of the pragmatically mediated semantic relation. In the fifth section, I will make some suggestions about possible combinatorics related to pragmatically mediated semantic relations. In the sixth section, I will consider pragmatic and discursive versions of the mind-body identity M=B. In the last section, I will conclude that the explanatory gap is a gap in a pragmatically mediated semantic relation between B and M. It is closed if we do not neglect pragmatics.

2 The Hard Problem

The *hard problem* in the philosophy of mind can be formulated as follows. Let us suppose that type-type physicalism is true, and in particular, every phenomenal property M *is* (identical to) a physical property B, M=B. Let us suppose, for instance, that the property of being in pain is identical to the property of being excited C-fibers. Then it seems that M could have been identical to some other physical property than B. The problem arises from trying to explain why M is B and not some other physical property B' or not even a physical property at all. In other words, there is the so-called *explanatory gap* between M and B.

Of course, from the dualist's point of view, the explanatory gap between M and B is ontological, and it cannot be closed. The most popular physicalist approach to the hard problem says that the explanatory gap between M and B is purely epistemic, and is due to the specific character of the phenomenal concept M which picks out the same physical property as the theoretical concept B. The phenomenal concepts are generalizations of ordinary language concepts like "pain" and "red". The former can also be used non-discursively or introspectively. The conceptual expression of identity, M=B, where M is a phenomenal concept, B is a theoretical concept of the corresponding property, would produce the illusion of an ontological gap, because of the phenomenal character of M.

Nevertheless, it is known that in this case the problem re-appears on the conceptual level: how do we close the gap between phenomenal concepts and theoretical concepts or, if this gap cannot be closed, how do we explain the specificity of phenomenal concepts from the physicalist's point of view?

I propose to solve the hard problem by means of Brandom's (2008) notion of *pragmatically mediated semantic relation* between a phenomenal vocabulary (concept) and the corresponding theoretical vocabulary (concept); the explanatory gap can be closed pragmatically.

3 A Pragmatic Approach to the Hard Problem

There is a quietist pragmatic view on the hard problem: the hard problem is a pseudo-problem, and the explanatory gap is a philosophical illusion due to unnatural or confused use of language. In ordinary language, the explanatory gap does not appear. This is a pure dissolution of the problem. I will speak about a *solution* to the hard problem, because I will make an appeal to the meta-conceptual apparatus of meaning-use analysis developed by Brandom, which makes explicit the implicit pragmatic relations between vocabularies. This will allow us to understand the nature of the explanatory gap and give a constructive response to the question posed by Wittgenstein: « The feeling of unbridgeable gulf between consciousness and brain-process: How does it come about that this does not come into the considerations of our ordinary life? » (Wittgenstein, PI, 412).

I will suppose that pragmatism is normative: practices/language games are governed, in general, by implicit conceptual norms. I will consider these norms to be rules in the Wittgensteinian sense. Not only the practical abilities, or pragmatic concepts, but also the theoretical concepts can be understood as such norms/rules. Their exercise must be correct in practice.

One can see the notion of practice as a generalization of the notion of experience, and hence, phenomenal concepts as pragmatic concepts of phenomenal experiences. Then the explanatory gap is an apparent gap between a phenomenal concept and a theoretical concept referring to one and the same phenomenal experience or a gap between the concepts and their referent. Within the experience itself, where both concepts are implicit, the gap is absent. In Wittgensteinian terms, the explanatory gap is a gap between a rule and its application – a language game governed by this rule. It is closed pragmatically within the language game.

From such a pragmatic perspective, the identity M=B is a language game governed by the concepts/rules B, M. The formal identity M=B is also a rule.[1] In principle, the concepts B and M can be used differently: M=B' and M'=B are language games which are different from M=B. This means that the identity as a language game is not unambiguous. The type-type physicalism is true, although not in its classical non-normative version, but as a normative physicalism/naturalism – physicalism/naturalism of language games, which are both natural and normative at the same time.

3.1 A Normative Naturalism

A normative physicalism/naturalism can be understood in a few equivalent ways. It can be understood in the sense that there are non-reducible normative facts, that is, facts that certain things ought to be the case, or facts about how certain things ought to be, which are compatible with physicalist/naturalist ontology, or it can be understood as saying that at least some physical/natural facts are irreducibly normative or have a normative dimension in the sense that they must, in principle, be justifiable. In other words, according to normative physicalism/naturalism, norms are implicit in nature (in physical/natural facts). An assertional Wittgensteinian language game can be viewed as a normative fact or a judgment about a normative fact.

3.2 An Analytic Interpretation of the Second Philosophy of Wittgenstein

I think there is an analytic interpretation of the second philosophy of Wittgenstein (making it analytically explicit) as a specific normative naturalism of language games, which in its spirit is very close to Brandom's analytic pragmatism. The second philosophy of Wittgenstein is not a radical pragmatism, even though Wittgenstein stresses the investigation of the phenomenon of coming into being of new language games. It implicitly contains a reconciliation of the analytic philosophy and pragmatism. The idea of therapy of philosophy with help of natural ordinary language plays in it a secondary role. Wittgenstein himself is not a Wittgensteinian quietist. The real concern of the second philosophy of Wittgenstein is ontological – about the nature of "language games".

The Wittgensteinian slogan *meaning is use* is not a reduction of the meaning to use, but a synthesis of both, an identity of meaning and use, or a pragmatic meaning-use relation.

Of course, the identity of meaning and use doesn't mean that there is no distinction between the "meaning" and the "use". Wittgenstein also says that the meaning *is in the use*, that is, associated with the use. The slogan should be understood in the sense that there is no sharp border between the meaning and the use, between the

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[1] This rule is a pragmatic metarule for the language game "M is necessarily B" elaborated from the game "M is B". The game "M is necessarily B" can be formally represented as the Kripkean identity *necessary a posteriori*, that is, as the identity between two modally rigid designators.

conceptual and physical/natural. The natural use has a normative dimension – in a broad sense, it is a meaning. Conversely, every meaning can be naturalized: it is not only a theoretical entity associated with a use, but it is itself a certain use. This is a pragmatic naturalistic interpretation of the slogan. In Brandom's notation this interpretation takes the following form: PV-suff (the discursive practice P deploys the vocabulary V) means "V is P" (the meaning V is the use P).

Here is a semantic interpretation of the slogan: the meaning of a word is the rule for its use. "Meaning is (in the) use" means: the application of the rule/meaning generates the use - a language game governed by this rule. In Brandom's notation this means: VP-suff, that is, "the meaning V specifies the use P".

If both PV-suff* ≡ PP'-suff & P'V-suff (V is elaborated from P) and VP-suff (V specifies P) at the same time, that is in Brandom's notation, V is a LX-vocabulary relative to P, then one can say that the meaning V= P' pragmatically supervenes on the use P. In philosophy of mind, the claim "consciousness is use" is an analogue of the claim "meaning is use". Hence one can also define the notion of pragmatic supervenience of consciousness. It is known that the notion of modal supervenience is purely logical; it cannot, for example, explain the mental causation. Maybe a pragmatic unpacking of the notion of modal supervenience, if it exists, could allow us to resolve the problem of mental causation.

4 The Identity M=B as a Pragmatically Mediated Semantic Relation

I'd like to remind the reader that my proposal is to interpret the identity B=M analytically as a pragmatically mediated semantic relation between B and M. What is a pragmatically mediated semantic relation?

Let us look, for example, at Brandom's interpretation of Sellar's claim that the vocabulary of appearance, how things appear, V_{look}, presupposes the corresponding objective vocabulary of existence, how things actually are, V_{is}, as a $V_{is}V_{look}$ – *necessary* pragmatically mediated relation,

$V_{is}V_{look}$ - nec = $P_{is}V_{is}$ - suff & $P_{is}P_{look}$ - nec & $P_{look}V_{look}$ - suff,

where I use the symbol of conjunction & to connect the different components of the resultant pragmatically mediated semantic relation.

The meaning of notation can be described as follows. $V_{is}V_{look}$ - nec means: the capacity for deploying the vocabulary V_{is} is necessary to deploy the vocabulary V_{look}. $P_{is}V_{is}$-suff means: the practice P_{is} is sufficient to deploy the vocabulary V_{is}. $P_{is}P_{look}$ - nec means: the practice P_{is} is necessary to elaborate the practice P_{look}. $P_{look}V_{look}$ - suff means: the practice P_{look} is sufficient to deploy the vocabulary V_{look} (Brandom 2008).

V_{is} and V_{look} are deployed in different practices, P_{look} and P_{is}, – the phenomenological vocabulary of appearance pragmatically emerges from the objective vocabulary, – but these practices are about one and the same object.

Let us take another example.

According to Brandom, non-indexical vocabulary can serve as an adequate *pragmatic metavocabulary* for indexical vocabulary, $V_{non-index}V_{index}$ - suff. This pragmatically mediated semantic relation is an expressive bootstrapping.

For example, though the indexical 'now' is not semantically equivalent to the description "the time of utterance", there is a pragmatically mediated semantic relation between them. One could write this pragmatically mediated semantic relation as the identity "*now* is *the time of utterance*".

The practical rules for this language game are: "If at time t a speaker wants to assert that some property *P* holds at time t, it is correct to say '*P* holds now' ", "If a speaker at time t asserts '*P* holds now', the speaker is committed to the property holding at time t." (Brandom 2008, pp. 25-26)

Now, it is known that in some important respects phenomenal concepts resemble indexical concepts.

One can suppose that there is a pragmatically mediated semantic relation between M and B which is analogous to the pragmatically mediated semantic relation between indexicals and their third-person objective descriptions.

Let us suppose that, speaking in Brandom's terms, there are two vocabularies (or only two concepts): a theoretical one V_{th} (B) and a phenomenal one V_{ph} (M), such that V_{th} (B) is $V_{th}P$ (BP) - suff, where the new

notation VP-suff means "the vocabulary V is sufficient to specify the practice P" (in this case V makes explicit or explains P), and the practice P, in turn, is PVph (PM) - suff to deploy the vocabulary Vph (the concept M). I suggest that a pragmatically mediated semantic relation of such a kind might make explicit one of the possible pragmatic meanings of the identity M=B.[2]

In terms of the example above, the theoretical concept of being excited C-fibers specifies a practice which is sufficient to deploy the phenomenal concept of being in pain: *excited C-fibers = pain*. The specification itself is a certain pragmatic act, which can be activated or not. The referent, the property of being in pain, is a certain "practice". It cannot be determined by only one concept - the theoretical concept of being excited C-fibers or the phenomenological concept of being in pain. This determination requires both these concepts: it is the whole pragmatic identity that determines the referent.[3]

More generally, a pragmatically mediated semantic relation includes what Brandom calls PP' – suff relation: P is sufficient for the elaboration of the practice P', and/or PP''- nec relation (see the pragmatically mediated semantic relation between V$look$ and Vis above). One can suggest that a *correlation* between B and M might be interpreted as a pragmatically mediated semantic relation of the following kind:

$$V_B V_M – suff = V_B P - suff \ (or \ PV_B - suff) \ \& \ PP' - suff \ \& \ P'V_M - suff \ (or \ V_M P'- suff) \qquad (1)$$

The pragmatic relation (1) means: "the concept B is sufficient to characterize the concept M".

The PP' – suff relation and $V_B V_M$ - suff - the resultant pragmatically mediated semantic relation between vocabularies - can be understood as the Wittgensteinian extension of the initial practice P (vocabulary V_B) by means of a pragmatic projection. Every normative practice can be extended in accordance with its norms/rules. The norms/rules themselves can be modified in the course of the extension. Such extension must satisfy the condition of family resemblance. I interpret the Wittgensteinian notion of family resemblance as follows: There is such-and-such family resemblance between two practices/language games if and only if these practices/language games are governed by the corresponding common, in general implicit, rule. From this point of view, language does have a "downtown". It makes sense to speak of a family resemblance relation only between possible uses of a rule, which are not arbitrary and determined by a natural justifiable extension of the domain of its established uses.[4]

Since the pragmatically mediated semantic relation is not univocal, the expression of the identity "B is M" or the correlation "B correlates with M" is not univocal either. This expression is a certain practice that might involve the following elements:

VP-suff, VP-nec, PV-suff, PV-nec, PP' – suff, PP' – nec, VV-suff, VV-nec.

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[2] Functional reductionism says that the mind-body identity M=B means that the physical property B is an empirical realizer of the *a priori* functional role F of the mental property M. Since there is no restriction on the possible physical realizers, such position is, metaphysically, functionalism: the realizers are not supposed to have anything in common, or resemble each other (see Block (Forthcoming) for a critique of functional reductionism as physicalism ontologically, but as functionalism metaphysically). Let us suppose now that, in addition, there is some kind of pragmatic relation between the functional role F and the property M and hence between F and B. This condition would play the role of a restriction on possible realizers of the functional role F. Then the functionalism is transformed into normative physicalism: M=F=B - identity as a pragmatically mediated relation, or a Wittgensteinian language game governed by the rules M, F and B. Let M=F=B' be a different language game with a different pragmatic relation and a different realizer, B'. Then the family resemblance relation of some kind between B and B' due to the common implicit rule M would play the role of a common first-order physical property in classical physicalism.

[3] The *explanatory gap* between a phenomenal state and its neurological description cannot be closed merely by a more sophisticated description. An appeal to phenomenal concepts turns out to be necessary. Conversely, using neurological concepts is necessary to justify using phenomenal concepts; otherwise, the corresponding phenomenal knowledge may turn out to be "private knowledge". The mind-body identity M=B must be viewed as a pragmatic connection between a phenomenal concept M and a neurological concept B. Neither the concept M nor the concept B alone fixes the referent of the identity. So-called *neuro-phenomenology* by Varela takes into account this conceptual dualism by proposing to extend the science by introducing into it phenomenal concepts and the corresponding practices of their use. (Varela 1995)

[4] For Wittgenstein, as I understand him, the capacity to make assertions or claims, or equivalently, the capacity to use discursive rules/concepts is PV-nec for the deployment of any discursive vocabulary. In other words, this is the core of capacities common to all discursive practices. Furthermore, the capacity to use rules/concepts and the capacity to justify their use – the capacity of inferring - are mutually PP-nec. Hence, in these respects, I see Brandom's position as exactly Wittgensteinian.

5 Combinatorics of Pragmatically Mediated Semantic Relations

It might be possible to introduce a system of "combinatorics" related to these elements.

If, for example PV-suff, where $V=V_{max}$ is the maximal vocabulary deployed in the practice P, then also VP-suff. Moreover, PV_{max}-suff = $V_{max}P$-suff =$V_{max}P$-nec = PV_{max} - nec, or V_{max} = P : meaning is use (see subsection 3.2).

More generally, one might suppose that PV-suff* = VP-suff, where PV-suff* $\equiv$ PP' - suff & P'V - suff is the process of pragmatic elaboration/explicitation, VP-suff itself is a practice.[5]

Conversely, in general VP-suff does not entail PV-suff: a pragmatic metavocabulary V is not explicitly deployed in specified practice; it is implicit in it.

Note that the practice P'= VP-suff – the practice of specifying P using V - is a practice in which the vocabulary V is deployed: (VP-suff)V-suff. It seems that the latter practice can be pragmatically elaborated from the practice P: P (VP-suff) – suff. Then the vocabulary V both specifies and is elaborated from P.

Hence my hypothesis is that the elaboration/explicitation PV-suff* = PP'-suff & P'V-suff and the specification VP-suff is one and the same process: (VP-suff) = (P' = V, i.e., (P'V-suff)) = PV-suff*, where V is a LX-vocabulary relative to P. The only difference between the elaboration and the specification is in the order of determination: the former makes explicit an implicit rule/concept contained in P, the latter applies the explicit rule/concept to P. In subsection 3.2, I suggested that the LX - relation might be used to define "pragmatic supervenience".

Further, one and the same practice P might be sufficient to deploy two different vocabularies V_M and V_B, for example, in the following sense: PV_M - suff* = PP' - suff & $P'V_M$ - suff, PV_B - suff* = PP''- suff & $P''V_B$ - suff. Then PV_M - suff* & PV_B - suff* = $V_M P$ - suff & $V_B P$ - suff, that is, both V_M and V_B are LX-vocabularies relative to P.

Brandom shows that the practice of rational rectification Prs is $PrsV_N$ - suff and $PrsV_M$ - suff, where V_N is the vocabulary of normative incompatibility and V_M is the vocabulary of modal incompatibility. In detail, P_1P_N – suff & $P_N V_N$ - suff & P_2P_M - suff & $P_M V_M$ - suff, where P_1, P_2 are two sub-practices of Prs. The two senses of 'incompatibility' – normative and modal – are not homonyms. This reflects the existence of an intimate pragmatic relation between both vocabularies.[6]

It seems to me that the relations between conceptual normativity and modality can be understood in Wittgensteinian terms as follows. A factual judgment is a Wittgensteinian assertional language game. The corresponding rule/concept is implicit in the fact viewed as a purely pragmatic language game from which the judgment is pragmatically elaborated and which it makes explicit or explains.[7] The modal question is the question about how the fact might be or how the fact could have been. The possibilities here are not the Kripkean metaphysical possibilities but the "real possibilities" of the Wittgensteinian rule use, that is, the modal language games "might be" ("could have been") associated with the factual language game.

In Brandom's terms, the intentional explanatory gap – a gap between words and world - is a gap between the subjective/normative and the objective/modal poles of intentional relations, or, in my terms, it is a gap between the Wittgensteinian rule and its applications. Brandom understands intentionality to be a pragmatically mediated semantic relation which closes the intentional explanatory gap. The explanatory gap between the phenomenal and physical can be closed analogously.

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[5] PV-suff* = VP-suff does not entail PV-nec, since V could also specify a different practice P', VP'-suff. However, there must be a family resemblance between P and P'.

[6] Note that for Wittgenstein, the modal incompatibility, such as "something cannot be both red and green at the same time", is a conceptual truth: a sentence of the "philosophical grammar". In this sense, modal incompatibility *is* conceptual incompatibility.

[7] I interpret the Wittgensteinian notion of a rule as determined by its explicit general formulation and a set of its established applications between which there is a relation of family resemblance due to the common rule. It is the ordinary language notion of a rule. The general formulation of a rule can be viewed as a formulation of a necessary law, the applications – as the possibilities. In such an interpretation, the conceptual normativity is the modality.

6 Pragmatic Relations between Pragmatic and Discursive Identities

According to Brandom, there is an intimate, pragmatically mediated semantic relation between purely pragmatic intentionality, partly pragmatic - partly discursive intentionality and purely discursive intentionality. Respectively, the identity M=B can be more or less discursive.

One can distinguish, for example, between the following cases: (a) pragmatic identity M=B (the rules/concepts M, B and M=B are implicit), (b) partly discursive identity M=B as an explicit use of the rule/concept M (B) (M (B) specifies the pragmatic identity, the rule/concept B (M) is implicit), (c) discursive identity M=B (M and B specify the common referent), (d) formal identity M=B as an explicit rule.

If the identity M=B is purely pragmatic, a gap or any appearance of a gap between M and B is obviously absent. If it is partly discursive, the gap is absent thanks to the pragmatic relation between the discursive and pragmatic levels. Nevertheless, the appearance of a gap can, for example, be due to the confusion between these levels resulting from neglecting the pragmatic relation between them. This confusion can be viewed as the confusion between reality and its description. I think that the struggle against such confusions is one of the central points of the second philosophy of Wittgenstein.

The discursive pragmatic relation between B and M (case (c) above) is weaker than the pragmatic relation between them within the purely pragmatic identity (case (a)); so it can be easily neglected. This entails the doctrine of dualism and the view about a purely nomological relation between two kinds of properties.

In Brandom's terms, the case (c) is the following pragmatically mediated semantic relation:

$$V_{BP}\text{-suff} \,\&\, V_{MP}\text{-suff}, \tag{2}$$

where the rules/concepts M and B are explicative of, or specify, one and the same practice P.[8] Note that (2) includes the case V_{BP}-suff & PV_M-suff.[9] In general, the practice (2) does not include the practice P itself – the common referent of M and B.

7 Conclusion

In conclusion, I claim that the referent of the mind-body identity is not a bold physicalist property, but a physicalist property with a justification, or a property as a language game. Such referent is not static, but dynamic. In other words, the identity M=B viewed as a language game is a contextual normative fact or a judgment about it; that is, it must be justifiable in a given context. The formal identity M=B is an epistemic rule. The classical non-normative physicalism is false.

The pragmatically mediated semantic relation allows for the closing of the gap between a phenomenal concept M and a theoretical concept B. The practice of specification is a gapless pragmatic connection between the term M (B) and the referent/practice P, and so between M and B. The explanatory gap is a gap in the pragmatically mediated semantic relation. It is closed if we do not neglect pragmatics. In Brandom's (2008, p. 193) words: what relates M and B "is a *process, a practice, the exercise of an ability, a kind of practical doing*".

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[8] The practice of specification can be more or less close to the specified practice P, so that at a limit when PV_{max}-suff, $V=V_{max}$, it coincides with P.

[9] Here is an analogy to the mind-body identity. According to Brandom (2008, p. 73), the isomorphism ("identity") established by Descartes between algebraic formulae and geometric figures is a pragmatically mediated semantic relation between syntactic properties and semantic ones. Note that mathematics and physics are imbued with different kinds of more or less pragmatic identities and equivalences which, after having been made explicit, become different kinds of "isomorphisms". The "heuristic" pragmatic identities and equivalences are not something approximate. They are authentic practices.