Sense, Category, Questions: Reading Deleuze with Ryle

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Abstract

Gilles Deleuze's notion of sense, as developed in *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*, is meant to be a fourth dimension of the proposition besides denotation, manifestation and signification. While Deleuze explains signification in inferentialist terms, he ascribes to sense some very unusual properties, making it hard to understand what sense is. The aim of this paper is to improve this situation by confronting Deleuzian sense with a more or less contemporary, but otherwise rather distant philosophical conception: Gilbert Ryle's theory of categories and category mistakes. The leading idea is that to understand the sense of a proposition regarding X is to know the category of the concept X, which requires that one knows which questions may appropriately be asked with regard to X. Thus, sense, category and questions are intimately related to each other. Finally, it seems to be consistent with Deleuze's views to assume that abstract signification is contextually generated by concrete sense.

Keywords: Deleuze, sense, signification, Ryle, category, question

I. Denotation, Manifestation, Signification and Sense

What Frege called 'sense' (in German, *Sinn*) other philosophers preferred to call 'meaning'. What Frege called 'meaning' (*Bedeutung*) others preferred to call 'reference'. Thus, meaning became distinguished from reference and identified with sense. For Gilles Deleuze, however, meaning and sense are two different things and both must be kept apart

from reference and manifestation. Following the English translations of Deleuze's books *Différence et répétition* and *Logique du sens*, I will use 'denotation' (which renders the French *désignation*) instead of 'reference', and 'signification' instead of 'meaning'. In this terminology, then, we have to consider denotation, manifestation, signification and sense.

Denotation and manifestation, however, are of minor importance in the present context, so it will suffice to look at them rather briefly. Deleuze's account of these notions is in accordance with established theories in linguistics and the philosophy of language. Denotation, he writes, 'is the relation of the proposition to an external state of affairs (*datum*). The state of affairs is *individuated*; it includes particular bodies, mixtures of bodies, qualities, quantities, and relations. Denotation functions through the associations of the words themselves with *particular* images *which ought to* "represent" the state of affairs' (Deleuze 2004b: 16). This passage includes some controversial claims. Not all philosophers would describe denotation in terms of images and representations. Nor would they choose normative vocabulary like the word 'ought' (French *doivent*, from *devoir*). But nevertheless, what Deleuze says about denotation lies within the range of existing views, or at least is very close to some of these views.

The same goes for the second notion, manifestation: 'It concerns the relation of the proposition to the person who speaks and expresses himself. Manifestation therefore is presented as a statement of desires and beliefs which correspond to the proposition' (Deleuze 2004b: 17). A person who asserts that p thereby expresses the belief that p, as well as the intention (desire) to express this belief. This is not to say that the person actually does believe that p. She could also express a belief that she does not have. In that case the statement would be a lie. Yet even then we would assume that the person intends to express this belief, for this is what lying means: intentionally expressing a belief one does not have. Also, as Deleuze adds to the above, expression/manifestation is a matter of causal inference. If we have no reason to assume a lie, we may assume that the assertion that p has been caused by the person's belief that p.[1]

Let me now turn to the third notion, signification. In the late 1960s, when the above mentioned books by Deleuze were first published, inferential semantics was not as popular as it is today. It is therefore remarkable that Deleuze's account of signification is of an inferentialist kind:

From the standpoint of signification, we always consider the elements of the proposition as 'signifying' conceptual implications capable of referring to other propositions, which serve as premises of the first. Signification

is defined by this order of conceptual implication where the proposition under consideration intervenes only as an element of a 'demonstration,' in the most general sense of the word, that is, either as premise or conclusion.... Demonstration must not be understood in a restricted, syllogistic or mathematical sense, but also in the physical sense of probabilities or in the moral sense of promises and commitments. In this last case, the assertion of the conclusion is represented by the moment the promise is effectively kept. (Deleuze 2004b: 18)

According to inferential semantics, to grasp the signification of a proposition is to learn how to use it in the context of inferences, where 'inference' must be taken in a theoretical as well as in a practical sense. Michael Dummett describes this as follows:

Learning to use a statement of a given form involves, then, learning two things: the conditions under which one is justified in making the statement; and what constitutes acceptance of it, i.e. the consequences of accepting it. Here 'consequences' must be taken to include both the inferential powers of the statement and anything that counts as acting on the truth of the statement. (Dummett 1981: 453)

On this view, the signification of a statement is composed of justification conditions and of consequences, the latter including commitments and entitlements to say or to do certain things.[2] It may help to give a (somewhat trivial) example to illustrate the basic idea. A person who sees that a window is open is *justified* to assert that the window is open. By making this assertion, she is also *committed* to agree that the room has at least one window. And under appropriate circumstances she may be *entitled* to close the window. If she has additionally promised to close the window, she will even be *committed* to doing so.

As *questions* will be coming into focus later, it is important to note that one part of the signification of a statement is the entitlement to ask certain questions. A person who says that the window is open is thereby entitled to ask, for example, who opened the window or for how long it has been open. One must add, however, that other factors may prevent the person from actually asking these questions. It may be impolite or forbidden to do so in a particular situation, or inappropriate in some other sense. After all, the entitlement conveyed by a statement is just one of the forces that act in a social situation and it may be overruled by others.

Since inferential semantics is usually presented as a rival theory to truth-conditional semantics, it may be misleading that Deleuze defines signification also as '*the condition of truth*, the aggregate of conditions

under which the proposition "would be" true' (Deleuze 2004b: 18). But the context makes clear that here Deleuze does not appeal to truth-conditional semantics, that is, to the view that the signification of a proposition is given by its truth conditions. Again we must think of inferential relations, which can be understood as concerning *possibly true propositions*. A deductively valid inference, in particular, is one whose conclusion *would be* true if the premises were true. Neither the premises nor the conclusion need to be true in reality. This is probably why Deleuze mentions truth conditions at all, and why he refers to signification 'as the possibility for the proposition to be true' (Deleuze 2004b: 22).

As to *sense*, in Deleuze's theory, we get a first understanding of this notion by considering some features that distinguish it from signification. Deleuze, following the terminology of traditional syllogistics, explains that sense is neutral as to the quality, quantity and modality of a proposition. 'Quality' refers to the distinction between affirmation and negation; hence a proposition has the same sense as its negation. Differences in quantity do not count either; hence a proposition about *all* things of a kind does not change its sense when 'all' is replaced by 'some'. And finally, 'p' has the same sense as 'possibly p' and 'necessarily p', as these are just differences in modality.

Deleuze even goes so far as to say that sense is affected neither by the order of subject and predicate nor by that of antecedent and consequent. Referring to the work of Lewis Carroll, he gives examples such as 'cats eat bats' and 'bats eat cats', as well as 'I breathe when I sleep' and 'I sleep when I breathe'. Another quite surprising claim is that inconsistent propositions like 'squares are round' have sense but no signification (Deleuze 2004b: 41).[3]

In the face of these statements, it does not seem helpful to express the sense of a proposition by means of another proposition. If you do not know what the sense of 'cats eat bats' is, you will not gain much if you are told that it is identical to the sense of 'bats eat cats', 'cats *do not* eat bats', or 'cats *possibly* eat bats'. Deleuze therefore tries some alternative approaches, indicating that the sense of a sentence could perhaps also be expressed in infinitive, participial or interrogative form (Deleuze 2004a: 194). For example, the sense of 'The sky is blue' might be rendered as 'the being-blue of the sky' or 'Is the sky blue?'

It is tempting to assume that these ways of expressing sense add up to an account of *propositional content*. 'The sky is blue' arguably has the same propositional content as 'the being-blue of the sky' and 'Is the sky blue?'[4] However, propositional content cannot be what Deleuze has

in mind. For the propositional content of an utterance is affected by the difference between affirmation and negation, by differences in quantity and modality, as well as by the exchange of subject and predicate or of antecedent and consequent. If sense were propositional content, the sense of p could not be identical to that of not-p. The same goes for the other examples mentioned above: possibly.../necessarily..., all.../some..., 'cats eat bats'/'bats eat cats', 'I breathe when I sleep'/ 'I sleep when I breathe'. Each of these pairs combines two different propositional contents.

So it seems that we cannot identify sense with propositional content. This result correlates with Deleuze's assertion that it would be a mistake to construe sense as a 'neutralized double of the proposition' (Deleuze 2004b: 38; see also 2004a: 195). Sense is not identical to propositional content, nor can we refer to it by using phrases that resemble propositions, phrases like 'the being-blue of the sky' or 'that the sky is blue'. These, too, are just 'doubles' of the proposition 'The sky is blue'. And this also holds for the corresponding question, 'Is the sky blue?' There is still too much resemblance between questions and propositions. But although the question is just another double of the proposition, Deleuze suggests that replacing the latter by the former is a first step towards a better analysis of sense, as questions are closely associated with *problems*:

> the interrogative formula has at least one advantage: at the same time as it invites us to consider the corresponding proposition as a response, it opens up a new path for us. A proposition conceived as a response is always a particular solution, a case considered for itself, abstractly and apart from the superior synthesis which relates it, along with other cases, to a problem as problem. Therefore interrogation, in turn, expresses the manner in which a problem is dismembered, cashed out and revealed, in experience and for consciousness, according to its diversely apprehended cases of solution. Even though it gives us an insufficient idea, it thereby inspires in us the presentiment of that which it dismembers.
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> Sense is located in the problem itself. Sense is constituted in the complex theme, but the complex theme is that set of problems and questions in relation to which the propositions serve as elements of response and cases of solution. This definition, however, requires us to rid ourselves of an illusion which belongs to the dogmatic image of thought: problems and questions must no longer be traced from the corresponding propositions which serve, or can serve, as responses. (Deleuze 2004a: 195f.; see also 2004b: 139)

Sense is located in the problem, constituted in the complex theme. 'Problem' and 'theme' are just two of the terms Deleuze uses to refer

to sense.[5] Another one is 'idea', one of his examples being the idea of physical atomism (Deleuze 2004a: 232f.), which is the idea that matter consists of particles some of which are indivisible. Here we are using a propositional clause, 'that matter consists of particles'. But Deleuze denies that the idea is itself a proposition or something akin to it. Rather, the idea is a problem, and the problem is a set of questions. Strictly speaking, 'The problem is a set of questions' is a kind of slogan that we may use for the sake of convenience. It would be more precise to say that the problem is an entity in its own right whose various parts or aspects can be grasped by asking appropriate questions.[6]

The problem of physical atomism includes questions like the following: 'Does matter consist of atoms?', 'What types of atoms exist?', 'What shapes do atoms have?', 'What masses do they have?', 'Do they move?', 'In which ways do they move?', 'Why does a particular atom move?', and also, 'What is an atom?'[7] Any one of these questions could be answered by an appropriate proposition, and this proposition would be a partial solution of the problem, solving that part of the problem which is covered by the question. For example, the question 'Do atoms move?' is answered by the proposition 'Atoms move'. But in order to understand more of the problem, it is not enough to ask this single question. We must also have an understanding of other questions associated with the problem of atomism.[8]

II. Categories and Questions

In the preceding section, the notion of sense has been partly clarified by distinguishing it from the related notions of denotation, manifestation and signification. This clarification did not go far enough, of course. We have learned more about what sense is not than what it is. In order to supplement our negative concept with a positive one, we could take the usual way of Deleuze interpretation and appeal to those philosophers who Deleuze himself refers to in developing his position. But I will take a path that, to my knowledge, has not been pursued before. It will lead us to Gilbert Ryle, who is not mentioned by Deleuze, although his best-known book, *The Concept of Mind*, was published twenty years earlier than *Logique du sens*. If we had to sketch something like a map of philosophical temperaments and opinions, we would probably have to place these two philosophers on opposite poles, which makes this comparison even more interesting.

What I want to show in the following is that the notion of category as developed by Ryle is a close analogy to Deleuzian sense. My hypothesis is

this: to understand the sense of a proposition regarding X is to know the category of the concept X. The latter, in turn, requires that one knows which questions may appropriately be asked with regard to X. But first let us see what Ryle has to say about categories:

> To determine the logical geography of concepts is to reveal the logic of the propositions in which they are wielded, that is to say, to show with what other propositions they are consistent and inconsistent, what propositions follow from them and from what propositions they follow. The logical type or category to which a concept belongs is the set of ways in which it is logically legitimate to operate with it. (Ryle 1949: 8)[9]

Here, Ryle is concerned with inferences that involve propositions containing the respective concept. These inferences, he argues, determine the category of the concept. This seems to lead us back to the concept of signification, defined in inferentialist terms by Deleuze. Inferentialists usually maintain that the meaning of a word is given by its contribution to the meanings of the propositions in which it occurs. Referring to Wilfrid Sellars, inferentialist Robert Brandom writes: 'To grasp or understand a concept is, according to Sellars, to have practical mastery over the *inferences* it is involved in – to know, in the practical sense of being able to distinguish, what follows from the applicability of a concept, and what it follows from' (Brandom 1994: 89). Against this inferentialist background, we might be tempted to read Ryle in the following way: 'Category' is for concepts what 'signification' is for propositions. The first denotes the meaning of a concept, the second that of a proposition. Both are to be analysed in inferentialist terms, for the logical relations between propositions determine the meanings of concepts as well as those of the propositions.

However, although this picture of the relation between signification and category is theoretically appealing, it fails to address an important point. The difficulty is that 'signification', construed inferentially, is an abstract concept that covers a large number and variety of inferential relations, including justification conditions as well as consequences (that is, commitments and entitlements) of various kinds. Most of these will be irrelevant in typical conversational situations. Furthermore, it is certainly not possible for a single speaker to know all these inferences or to draw all of them in practice. Thus, it is neither necessary nor possible to know the 'complete' signification of a proposition. This concept is a construction of linguistic theory, an abstract entity, which is too 'big', as it were, for ordinary speakers. What they need to know is which inferences are actually relevant in a particular context.

Consider again the example of the window from section one. The proposition 'The window is open', in conjunction with the premise that most windows are rectangular, implies that the open window is probably rectangular, having a diagonal of a length that is the square root of $a^2 + b^2$, where a and b are the sides of the rectangle. This is a remote geometrical consequence that has no relevance at all in typical cases in which the proposition 'The window is open' is used. It might be important in a classroom, say, as part of a mathematics exercise. But usually we would not assume that a person must know how to calculate the length of the diagonal in order to know the meaning of 'The window is open'. The same goes for the *word* 'window'. In order to know its meaning, one need not be aware of the question as to how the length of the diagonal is to be computed from the lengths of the sides.

The inferences Ryle utilises in his book to explain the notion of category form only a subset of all the inferences that make up the complete signification of a proposition. How is this subset determined? What makes some inferences relevant and others not? In the following, I will argue that this subset of inferences is delineated by *questions*. Thus, as far as categories are concerned, the asking and answering of questions is the type of operation that counts. In fact, Ryle frequently exhibits the category of concepts by discussing questions.

Before we go on with Ryle, however, let us see whether Deleuze's philosophy of sense provides any indication of a theory of categories. The place to look for it is in Deleuze's discussion of paradoxes which draws on the work of Lewis Carroll. As in other areas of philosophy and science, the investigation of pathological cases helps to illuminate the 'normal' ones. Nonsense, the absence of sense, can teach us something about sense. In the preface of *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze even purports to present 'a series of paradoxes which form the theory of sense' (Deleuze 2004b: ix).

At least some of Carroll's violations of sense discussed by Deleuze can be interpreted as category mistakes as envisaged by Ryle. The following is an instructive example from *Alice in Wonderland* (quoted by Deleuze 2004b: 31):

'... and even Stigand, the patriotic Archbishop of Canterbury, found it advisable–'
  'Found *what*?' said the Duck.
  'Found *it*,' the Mouse replied rather crossly: 'of course you know what "it" means.'

'I know what "it" means well enough, when *I* find a thing,' said the Duck: 'it's generally a frog or a worm. The question is, what did the Archbishop find?'

The Mouse did not notice this question, but hurriedly went on, '– found it advisable to go with Edgar Atheling to meet William and offer him the crown. . . . ' (Carroll 1994: 32)

The wit of this little dialogue rests on the confusion of *finding a thing* and *finding something advisable*. As these belong to different categories, it is not appropriate to ask 'What did the archbishop find?' instead of asking 'What did he find advisable?' A comparable example is given by Ryle: ' "She came home in a flood of tears and a sedan-chair" is a well-known joke based on the absurdity of conjoining terms of different types' (Ryle 1949: 22). Classical rhetoric registers this figure of speech as *zeugma* or *syllepis*. On Ryle's account, the rhetorical effect is caused by a category mistake.

Another paradoxical case from *Alice in Wonderland* mentioned by Deleuze (2004b: 38; 2004a: 195) is the well-known grin of the Cheshire Cat:

'All right,' said the Cat; and this time it vanished quite slowly, beginning with the end of the tail, and ending with the grin, which remained some time after the rest of it had gone.

'Well! I've often seen a cat without a grin,' thought Alice; 'but a grin without a cat! It's the most curious thing I ever saw in all my life!' (Carroll 1994: 78)

Ontologically speaking, a grin is not a substance that can exist by itself. It is rather an accident, a property of the substance (the latter being the cat or its mouth). So if this is what is meant by 'a grin without a cat', we are facing another category mistake.

Suppose a person places a word in a category to which it does not belong. If that person does not intend to create a rhetorical, perhaps humorous effect, we would probably conclude that he or she does not understand the word – as the confused duck does not understand the phrase 'to find it advisable'. Assuming that to understand a word is to know its sense, we may conclude further that to know the sense of a word requires that one know its category.[10]

When Ryle discusses examples of categories and category mistakes, he also explains how one can recognise that two words belong to different categories. In particular, words of different categories cannot be connected by the word 'and', as in the above joke of the lady in the sedan-chair, or as in 'he bought a left-hand glove, a right-hand glove and

a pair of gloves'. Put in positive form, Ryle's criterion is the following: 'When two terms belong to the same category, it is proper to construct conjunctive propositions embodying them' (Ryle 1949: 22).

However, Ryle's primary method of determining categorical sameness or difference is the asking of questions. He often notes that certain questions are not appropriate with regard to concepts of a particular category. It does not make sense to ask 'Where is the pair of gloves?' when you see the two gloves. This question is improper because it implies that the pair is something apart from its components. It conflates the whole with its parts: the word 'pair' which denotes the whole belongs to a different category than the word 'glove' which denotes the parts.[11]

III. The Contextual Generation of Signification

The lesson to draw from Ryle's treatment of categories is that knowing the category of X amounts to knowing which questions it is appropriate to ask about X. At this point, the connection to Deleuze's notion of sense becomes visible. As already explained, Deleuze correlates sense and problem, and the problem can be characterised as a set of questions. Furthermore, although sense is said to be a 'dimension of the proposition' (Deleuze 2004b: 22), it is also addressed as *idea*, *problem* and *theme*. And the problem '*is not* propositional, although it does not exist outside of the propositions which express it. . . . The problem is neutral with respect to every mode of the proposition' (Deleuze 2004b: 140).

This applies to Ryle's categories as well. Categories are sub-propositional entities. We are talking of the category of a concept – 'window', 'glove', 'atom' and so on – not of that of a proposition. A concept can appear in propositions of various kinds. This is the reason why propositions that differ in quality, quantity or modality can be assigned to, or subsumed under, the same category. While the category itself is not propositional, 'it does not exist outside of the propositions which express it'.

Hence the discussion of sense shifts from propositions to words. We may still say that sense is 'a dimension of the proposition', but only because propositions include concepts like 'window', 'glove' and 'atom', and because we can ask to which categories these concepts belong. The notion of 'sense' primarily applies to constituents of propositions. This is obscured by Deleuze when he describes sense as a dimension of propositions, along with denotation, manifestation and signification. At the end of the day, however, the fact that the two propositions 'The window is open' and 'The window is not open' have the same sense

traces back to the fact that both contain the word 'window', and that both are therefore associated with questions like 'What is a window?', 'Is there a window?', 'Is it open?', 'Why is it open?', and so on.

However, with which questions a proposition is associated depends on the context in which it is used. It is easy to imagine circumstances in which the negative proposition 'The window is not open' triggers the question 'Is the window open?' which, if answered positively, causes the next question, 'Why is it open?' This could happen when the questioner does not trust the person who said that the window is not open. In other cases where there is no reason to doubt the speaker's claim, these questions would not arise. There would be other questions or none at all.

The context in which a proposition is being used is defined, at least to a considerable degree, by the questions that are taken to be relevant by the persons involved. In a way, we do not know what that context is unless we know which questions are being asked. This also suggests a new view of the relationship between sense and signification. We have seen that 'signification' is an abstract concept comprising a potentially infinite set of inferential relations. This concept is derived from concrete cases of language-use by steps of extrapolation and generalisation. Signification is supposed to consist of those inferences that are relevant in actual cases or could be relevant in potential ones. In a particular conversational situation, speakers operate only with small subsets of all the relations that make up signification, and these subsets are determined by sense, by a set of relevant questions.

In sum, then, signification is generated by pragmatic, contextual conditions that are set by sense. Deleuze ascribes to sense a 'generative' role, which is to 'engender the logical proposition with its determinate dimensions (denotation, manifestation, and signification)' (Deleuze 2004b: 138). And in a text written in 1986, he characterises his 'empiricism' in the following way:

> the abstract does not explain, but must itself be explained; and the aim is not to rediscover the eternal or the universal, but to find the conditions under which something new is produced (*creativeness*). In so-called rationalist philosophies, the abstract is given the task of explaining, and it is the abstract that is realized in the concrete. . . . Empiricism starts with a completely different evaluation: analysing the states of things, in such a way that non-preexistent concepts can be extracted from them. (Deleuze and Parnet 2006: vi)

Of course, as always, the quotation is taken out of its context. Deleuze's notion of empiricism is of a special kind, but this is not our issue.

What makes the quotation interesting for us is that it gives an idea of the relation between sense and signification. First comes the analysis of sense in contexts of language-use. This analysis yields a set of questions, which enables the identification of the problem around which the situation is organised. The notion of signification, in turn, is derived from these cases. In Deleuze's terms, it is a 'non-preexistent concept' that is 'extracted' from sense. Signification is 'the abstract' in comparison to which sense is 'the concrete'. When this abstraction is retrospectively applied to the concrete, then sense, as expressed by questions, is conceived as part of signification, more exactly, as that part which exists in the respective context.

The function of questions in this process is to make certain inferential relations relevant. Roughly speaking, the relevant inferences are those which connect the answers of the questions to a particular proposition. To explain this, let us return to Ryle's example of the two gloves. Suppose that these gloves are lying on opposite ends of the couch in front of you. There is also another person present to whom you say, 'There are two gloves on the couch'. The question whether the gloves belong together need not arise in this context. If it does not arise, the relevant part of the signification primarily concerns perceptual justification conditions. Your perceiving the gloves justifies your statement 'There are two gloves on the couch'. By uttering this proposition when perceiving the gloves, you prove your mastery of this part of the signification. It is a rather basic part, to be sure. But as I have described the situation so far, there is no reason to look beyond it.

Next, suppose the question arises as to whether the two gloves belong together, whether they form a pair. It does not matter who raises this question, but *if* it is raised, the question broadens our scope of the signification of 'There are two gloves on the couch'. Now it becomes relevant whether you know which answers to the question might be appropriate. This task is still quite simple, of course. You are confronted with a yes/no-question: 'Do the two gloves on the couch belong together?' So you only need to know that the answer is 'Yes, they do' or 'No, they do not'. Yet, however simple this task may be, by giving one of these answers you would prove that you know, in a concrete, practical sense, another part of the signification of the proposition 'There are two gloves on the couch'.

Additional questions might arise. Someone might want to know *why* the gloves are lying on the couch or to *whom* they belong. Thus, other parts of the signification would be generated, and the actors in the situation would become aware of possible ways of answering these

questions. If they lacked the requisite information, their answers would only be rather general. For example, they might say that the gloves are lying on the couch because someone who has been in this room before has put them there; that the gloves on the couch belong to some person, probably an adult (as they are too big for a child), and so on. Those who know more about the gloves could give more specific answers.

This interplay of assertions, questions and answers concerns inferential relations and therefore signification. The questions alluded to in the glove example are inferentially related, in a certain way, to 'There are two gloves on the couch', which is the proposition that started the conversation by raising the 'problem of the two gloves'. It should be noted, however, that questions are not directly related to propositions, but only by their *propositional contents*. For instance, the content of the yes/no-question 'Do the two gloves on the couch belong together?' can be expressed by the proposition 'The two gloves on the couch belong together'.[12] In the case of questions with interrogative words, we obtain the propositional content by replacing 'why', 'who', 'where', and so on, by a suitable variable. To choose just two examples, this replacement yields 'The gloves are lying on the couch because p' as content of 'Why are the gloves lying on the couch', as well as 'The two gloves on the couch belong to X' as content of 'To whom do the two gloves on the couch belong?'

Inferentialism has it that the signification of the proposition 'There are two gloves on the couch' is given by the inferential relations this proposition is involved in. Among these relations are those which exist between the proposition itself and the propositional contents of the above questions. The proposition is inferentially related to 'The two gloves on the couch belong together', 'The gloves are lying on the couch because p' and 'The gloves on the couch belong to X'. This proves that the propositional contents of the questions, and therefore indirectly the questions themselves, bear inferential relations to the proposition we are dealing with. And these relations make up a subset of the complete signification of the proposition.

Following Ryle, I have chosen somewhat dry examples concerning windows and gloves. These do have the advantage of familiarity, but nevertheless we shall end with one of the more appealing cases. Lewis Carroll's story of the Cheshire Cat involves a category mistake that has been made on purpose. Its paradoxical nature owes to the fact that we are prompted to imagine a grin without a something that is grinning (which John Tenniel could not picture in his famous illustrations, so he decided to draw the cat's head fading). The question arises as to *who*

it is that is grinning, and this question makes certain answers relevant. The reader of *Alice in Wonderland* knows that from 'There is a grin' it follows that there is *someone* who is grinning. The context of the story even suggests the more specific answer that it is the Cheshire Cat who is (still) grinning. Yet since the cat is said to have vanished, the story turns into a piece of nonsense.

We know why. The story defies a part of signification: the inference from 'There is a grin' to 'The Cheshire Cat is grinning', the latter being our best answer to 'Who is grinning?' This is one of the questions that constitute the problem of the Cheshire Cat's grin and the sense of the inferentially related propositions.

Notes

1. The nature of this causation arguably depends on the ontological nature of mental states, but we need not go into this here. This article is mainly concerned with an interpretation of Deleuze's philosophy of language; ontological issues will be touched upon only tangentially.
2. In the above quotation from *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze just talks of theoretical inferences (syllogistic and mathematical demonstration, physical probabilities) and practical commitments, such as the commitment to keep a promise. He does not mention entitlements, but these can safely be added to his account.
3. Deleuze does not substantiate the claim that inconsistent propositions lack signification. Perhaps he relies on the fact that these propositions cannot enter into inferences as possibly true statements. Classical logic, however, does ascribe an inferential role to them, if only a rather trivial one: *ex contradictione sequitur quodlibet.*
4. I am using 'propositional content' roughly as in Chapter 2.4 of Searle 1969. Although an utterance of 'the being-blue of the sky' is at best an incomplete speech act, it works as an 'indicator' of propositional content, as Searle would say. Searle, however, prefers that-clauses for indicating propositional content ('that the sky is blue'). Note also that for him a 'proposition' is the propositional content of a speech act, whereas Deleuze's usage of that term is wider.
5. The term 'event' belongs to this list, too, as sense is said to be 'an incorporeal, complex, and irreducible entity, at the surface of things, a pure event which inheres or subsists in the proposition' (Deleuze 2004b: 22). Another 'surface entity' is the concept, which 'speaks the event' (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 21). 'All concepts are connected to problems without which they would have no meaning [*sens*]' (16). Except that concepts are supposed to be solutions of problems, they have much in common with the latter. In particular, they are 'not propositional' (22). To keep the discussion simpler, however, I refrain from considering these notions of event and concept. I will reserve the word 'concept' for Ryle who uses it for a linguistic entity.
6. As indicated in the previous note, sense inheres or subsists, but does not exist. Furthermore, it is a dual entity on the border between world and language: 'It is rather the coexistence of two sides without thickness, such that we pass from one to the other by following their length. *Sense is both the expressible or the expressed of the proposition, and the attribute of the state of affairs.* It turns

one side toward things and one side toward propositions' (Deleuze 2004b: 25). Thus, sense is something very peculiar, to say the least.

7. A superficial reading might suggest that Deleuze rejects questions of the type 'What is X?' *per se*. But in fact he only rejects the Platonic-Socratic tradition in which these questions are understood as aiming at essences. Apart from that, Deleuze acknowledges their propaedeutic function in the Platonic discourse: 'Once it is a question of determining the problem or the Idea as such, once it is a question of setting the dialectic in motion, the question "What is X?" gives way to other questions, otherwise powerful and efficacious, otherwise imperative: "How much, how and in what cases?" The question "What is X?" animates only the so-called aporetic dialogues – in other words, those in which the very form of the question gives rise to contradiction and leads to nihilism, no doubt because they have only propaedeutic aims – the aim of opening up the region of the problem in general, leaving to other procedures the task of determining it as a problem or as an Idea' (Deleuze 2004a: 236f.).

8. It would lead us too far astray to discuss in detail how these questions are related to each other. A possible point of departure could be what Sylvain Bromberger calls a 'cluster of questions' (Bromberger 1966: 602). According to Bromberger, a cluster of questions is raised by some proposition, and a question belongs to this cluster if it stands to the proposition in a relation of mutual implication. That is, if the proposition is true, the question must have a correct answer, and conversely.

9. In his article 'Categories', published about a decade before *The Concept of Mind*, Ryle prefers to talk of 'concepts' without the adjective 'logical' (Ryle 1937/8). I follow him in this. Others may choose to replace 'logical' by 'ontological', as differences between logical categories are arguably related to ontological differences. This logical/ontological ambiguity of 'category' seems to correspond to the two-sidedness of sense mentioned in note 7 above. Compare Deleuze's distinction between the logical and the ontological proposition in *The Logic of Sense* (Deleuze 2004b: 138).

10. Here, 'to know' does not necessarily refer to knowing-that, that is, knowledge expressible in propositional form. There are cases in which it is possible to say *that* a word means such-and-such, thus giving the meaning of the word by using other words. But the knowledge in question is primarily a linguistic kind of *knowing-how*. A person who knows the sense of a word knows how to use it in the course of utterances, in accordance with its category.

11. The glove example suffices for our purposes, but in *The Concept of Mind* cases not based on a part-whole relation are more salient. In particular, there is the distinction between occurrences and dispositions which, in Ryle's opinion, provides a solution (or rather, dissolution) of the mind-body problem. There are questions about occurrences that cannot be asked about dispositions.

12. Thus, we could analyse the question as consisting of two parts, the first one expressing its content: 'The two gloves on the couch belong together. Yes or no?'

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