

Psychology and Semantics: Comments on Schiffer's "Intention-Based Semantics"

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Schiffer gives the phrase "intention-based semantics" a peculiar sense, which lets him use it as the title of a paper that is not about the semantics of natural languages—the topic to which this special number of the *Notre Dame Journal of Formal Logic* is dedicated. In his usage, the phrase "intention-based semantics" names the thesis that semantic properties *are* psychological properties—that is, roughly speaking, that meaning is a complex constructed out of belief and desire. He is inclined to accept this thesis, on the strength of two others:

- (i) a Gricean theory to the effect that whatever is said about meaning is logically equivalent to something said about beliefs and desires
- (ii) the thesis that belief and desire can be explicated without bringing in the concept of meaning.

Of these, (i) is relevant to this special issue of the *Notre Dame Journal*, and ten years ago Schiffer contributed significantly to it in his book *Meaning*. But in this paper he doesn't contribute much more; and indeed he now coolly declares (i) to be "barely of passing interest" unless it helps to establish

- (iii) the thesis that meaning *is* a construct out of belief and desire, not merely logically equivalent to such a construct,

which Schiffer sees as interesting because of the part it can play in a reduction of semantics to psychology and of that to neurology or whatever. Thus, we can still be interested in Gricean meaning theory even if we modishly wish to "have no truck with conceptual analysis", for it bears on an issue that is now at the centre of the stage: namely, the metaphysics of materialism. Schiffer does not