

We work in the dark--
we do what we can--
we give what we have.
Our doubt is our passion and our passion is our task.
The rest is the madness of art.

Henry James "The Middle Years"

Preface

That old philosopher Fred Allen used to say he couldn't understand why someone would spend years writing a novel, when for a few dollars you could buy one practically anywhere. A similar remark might be made about contributions to that peculiar genre of creative nonfiction writing to which philosophical essays such as this one belong. This book is an investigation into the nature of language: of the social practices that distinguish us as rational, indeed logical, concept-mongering creatures--knowers and agents. This is of course a topic that has been much explored by philosophers, both the mighty dead and the ablest contemporary thinkers. Surrounded as we are by the riches they have bequeathed, it is hard to avoid asking why anyone should bother reading--let alone writing--yet another such work. This question may seem all the more urgent inasmuch as it is acknowledged (indeed, some pains are taken to show) that the basic building blocks out of which this account is constructed--its motivating insights, commitments, and strategies--are not novel or original.

Still, though the ways of thinking and talking about thinking and talking presented here arise naturally out of a reading of the philosophical tradition (above all Kant, Frege, and Wittgenstein), and of its development by more recent thinkers, both that tradition and its significance for us today are by current standards seen decidedly on a slant. As a result, the story told in these pages comes at familiar things from an unfamiliar direction. Its promise lies in the sort of added depth and dimension that only binocular vision affords; that is the point of laying a substantially different conceptual perspective alongside our more accustomed line of sight. In keeping with this understanding of the sort of payoff that can be hoped for, the body of the work aims to set criteria of adequacy for a theory of discursive practice, motivate the approach adopted, work the model out in detail, and apply it. The idea is to show what kind of understanding and explanatory power one gets from talking this way, rather than to argue that one is somehow rationally obliged to talk this way.

Of course I take it that the claims made in what follows are true; I endorse those assertions; they express my commitments. One of the central tenets of the account of linguistic practice put forward here is that the characteristic authority on which the role of assertions in communication depends is intelligible only against the background of a correlative responsibility to vindicate one's entitlement to the commitments such speech acts express. It is possible to secure entitlement to the commitments (assertional, inferential, and referential) implicit in an idiom without gainsaying the possibility of entitlement to a different one. But even such a modest justificatory project is of interest only to someone who both understands the commitments in question and has some reason to want to become entitled to talk in ways that presuppose them.

Both of these ends are served by starting the story with some historical lessons. Accordingly, Chapters One and Two form an entrance hall to the rest of the edifice, one whose main architectural features are made more noticeable by the judicious placement of ancestor portraits. The same figure appears on many walls, almost always recognizable, but often portrayed from unusual vantage points (from behind, from above) or highlighting something other than the familiar face. In particular, the portrait of Frege will seem to some to be like one of those odd photographs of a reclining figure taken with the lens so close that the subject's left foot assumes gigantic proportions, dwarfing the rest of the individual, whose head and torso dwindle to the dimensions of insignificant appendages. Nonetheless, the tradition that is retrospectively constituted by the unusual emphases and filiations to be found here is meant to be coherent and compelling in its own terms. It is not just whatever rewriting of the history of philosophy happens to be needed to make the waning years of the twentieth century safe for the views I'm putting forward. Rather, those views have the shape they do because of this reading of how we got to where we are.

One of the overarching methodological commitments that orients this project is to explain the meanings of linguistic expressions in terms of their use--an endorsement of one dimension of Wittgenstein's pragmatism. For although he drove home the importance of such an approach, other features of his thought--in particular his theoretical quietism--have discouraged his admirers from attempting to work out the details of a theory of meaning, or for that matter, of use. One result has been a substantial disjunction between semantic theorizing--about the sorts of contents expressed by various locutions--on the one hand, and pragmatic theorizing--about the linguistic practices in which those locutions are employed--on the other. The explanatory strategy pursued here is to begin with an account of social practices, identify the particular structure they must exhibit in order to qualify as specifically linguistic practices, and then consider what different sorts of semantic contents those practices can confer on states, performances, and expressions caught up in them in suitable ways. The result is a new kind of conceptual role semantics. It is at once firmly rooted in actual practices of producing and consuming speech acts, and sufficiently finely articulated to make clear how those practices are capable of conferring the rich variety of kinds of content that philosophers of language have revealed and revelled in.

Claims about the relations between meaning and use only have a clear sense in the context of a specification of the vocabulary in which that use is described or ascribed. At one extreme, use clearly determines meaning in the strongest possible sense if admissible specifications of the use can include such phrases as "using the word 'not' to express negation," or "using the term 'Julius Caesar' to refer to Julius Caesar". At an opposite extreme, if admissible specifications of use are restricted to descriptions of the movements of particles expressed in the vocabulary of physics, not only will the use, so described, fail to settle what is meant or expressed by various noises or inscriptions, it will fail to settle even that anything is meant or expressed by them. The specification of use employed here is neither so generous as to permit semantic or intentional vocabulary, nor so parsimonious as to insist on purely naturalistic vocabulary.

Instead, it makes essential use of normative vocabulary. The practices that confer propositional and other sorts of conceptual content implicitly contain norms concerning how it is correct to use expressions, under what circumstances it is appropriate to perform various speech acts, and what the appropriate consequences of such performances are. Chapter One

introduces and motivates this normative pragmatics, which is rooted in considerations advanced by Kant, Frege, and Wittgenstein. No attempt is made to eliminate, in favor of nonnormative or naturalistic vocabulary, the normative vocabulary employed in specifying the practices that are the use of a language. Interpreting states, performances, and expressions as semantically or intentionally contentful is understood as attributing to their occurrence an ineliminably normative pragmatic significance.

Though this normative dimension of linguistic practice is taken to be ineliminable, it is not treated as primitive or inexplicable. It is rendered less mysterious in two ways. First, linguistic norms are understood as instituted by social practical activity. The pragmatic significances of different sorts of speech acts are rendered theoretically in terms of how those performances affect the commitments (and entitlements to those commitments) acknowledge or otherwise acquired by those whose performances they are. The norms implicit in linguistic practice are accordingly presented in a specifically deontic form. But these deontic statuses are understood in turn as a form of social status, instituted by the practical attitudes of those who attribute and acknowledge such statuses.

The natural world does not come with commitments and entitlements in it; they are products of human activity. In particular, they are creatures of the attitudes of taking, treating, or responding to someone in practice as committed or entitled (for instance, to various further performances). Mastering this sort of norm-instituting social practice is a kind of practical know-how--a matter of keeping deontic score by keeping track of one's own and others' commitments and entitlements to those commitments, and altering that score in systematic ways based on the performances each practitioner produces. The norms that govern the use of linguistic expressions are implicit in these deontic scorekeeping practices.

The second way norms are rendered less mysterious is by explaining exactly what is expressed by normative vocabulary. Beginning with basic deontic scorekeeping attitudes and the practices that govern them, an account is offered of how locutions must be used in order to express explicitly the very normative notions--is committed, is permitted, ought, and so on--that are appealed to in laying out the normative pragmatics. This is an explication of explicitly normative conceptual contents in terms of implicitly normative practices, rather than a reduction of normative terms to nonnormative ones. It illuminates the normative dimension of discursive practice in line with the methodological principle that implicit structures are often best understood by looking at how they can be made explicit.

The first step in the project is accordingly the elaboration of a pragmatics (a theory of the use of language) that is couched in terms of practical scorekeeping attitudes of attributing and acknowledging deontic statuses of commitment and entitlement. The pragmatic significance of performances--eventually, speech acts such as assertions-- is then understood to consist in the difference those performances make to the commitments and entitlements attributed by various scorekeepers. The next step is to say what structure such a set of social practices must have in order to qualify as specifically discursive practice. This is a matter of moving from pragmatics to semantics. The defining characteristic of discursive practice is the production and consumption of specifically propositional contents. It is argued in Chapter Two that propositional contentfulness should be understood in terms of inferential articulation; propositions are what can serve as premises and conclusions of inferences, that is, can serve as and stand in need of reasons. Chapter Three describes (in deontic scorekeeping terms) a model of social practices of giving and asking for reasons--specifically linguistic discursive practices,

which suffice to confer propositional contents on states, attitudes, performances, and expressions that play suitable roles in those practices.

This account of the conferral of semantic content by inferentially articulated social scorekeeping practice is further generalized in two different directions. First, it is shown how this model can be applied in order to understand not only linguistic meanings, but intentional contents generally. The propositional contentfulness of beliefs, no less than of claims, should be understood in terms of their role in reasoning of various kinds. The inferentially articulated commitments expressed by assertional speech acts are doxastic commitments. Much of the theoretical work done by the concept of belief can be done instead by appeal to this sort of deontic status, and to the practical scorekeeping attitudes of acknowledging or undertaking such commitments. A social, linguistic account of intentionality is accordingly elaborated in Chapter Three.

It is extended in Chapter Four to incorporate treatments of perception and action, and of the contribution those phenomena make to the empirical and practical dimensions of the propositional contents of the states, acts, and attitudes involved in them. It is not denied that it makes sense to talk about nonlinguistic creatures as having intentional states, but it is claimed that our understanding of such talk is parasitic on our understanding of the sort of full-blooded linguistic intentionality characteristic of states and attitudes that only beings who engage in discursive social practices can have. This story amounts, then, to an account of the relations of mindedness--in the sense of sapience rather than mere sentience--to behavior. As in the parallel case of meaning and use, the clarification of these relations must begin with a determination of what vocabulary it is admissible to use in specifying the relevant behavior; again there is a spectrum of possibilities, from allowing intentional vocabulary with semantic locutions, such as "acting as if one believed that snow is white", ranging down to restrictions to physicalistic or other naturalistic vocabulary, such as "one's left wrist rotating twenty degrees". The *via media* pursued here eschews intentional or semantic specifications of behavior, but permits normative and therefore social specifications of what is in fact linguistic behavior.

Where the first sort of generalization involves moving from consideration of language to consideration of mind, from talking to thinking and believing, the second involves moving from an account of the practices that constitute treating something as propositionally contentful to the practices that constitute treating something as conceptually contentful in a broader sense. In Chapter Six the notion of substitution and substitutional inferences is used to show how expressions such as singular terms and predicates, which cannot directly play the inferential role of premise or conclusion in an argument, nonetheless can play an indirectly inferential role in virtue of their systematic contributions to the directly inferential roles of sentences in which they occur. In Chapter Seven the notion of anaphora (whose paradigm is the relation between a pronoun and its antecedent) and anaphoric inheritance of substitutional commitment is used to show how even unrepeatable expressions such as demonstrative tokenings play substitution-inferential roles, and hence express conceptual contents. The result is a kind of conceptual role semantics that is distinguished first by the nature of the functional system with respect to which such roles are individuated and attributed: what is appealed to is role in the implicitly normative linguistic social practices of a community, rather than the behavioral economy of a single individual. It is also different from familiar ways of using the notion of conceptual role in conceiving of the conceptual in terms of specifically inferential articulation, and in its

elaboration of the fundamental substitutional and anaphoric substructures of that inferential articulation.

This semantic explanatory strategy, which takes inference as its basic concept, contrasts with the one that has been dominant since the Enlightenment, which takes representation as its basic concept. The inferentialist approach is by no means without precedent--though it has been largely a minority platform. Indeed, the distinction canonically drawn between Continental Rationalists such as Spinoza and Leibniz, on the one hand, and British Empiricists, such as Locke and Hume, is for many purposes more perspicuously rendered as a distinction between those endorsing an inferentialist order of explanation and those endorsing a representationalist order of explanation. The elements of the contemporary inferentialist program are extracted (in Chapter Two) from Frege of the *Begriffsschrift*, Sellars, and some of Dummett's writings.

The complementary theoretical semantic strategies of representationalism and inferentialism are bound by the same pair of general explanatory obligations: to explicate the concept treated as primitive, and to offer an account of other semantic concepts in terms of that primitive. The representationalist tradition has developed good answers to the second sort of concern, primarily by employing a variety of set-theoretic methods to show how proprieties of inference can be determined by representational properties of the claims that serve as their premises and conclusions. The explanatory challenge to that tradition lies rather in the first sort of demand, in saying what it is for something to have representational content, and in what the grasp or uptake of that content by speakers and thinkers consists. As the inferentialist program is pursued here, the proprieties of inference that serve as semantic primitives are explicated in the pragmatics; they are implicit in the practices of giving and asking for reasons. The major explanatory challenge for inferentialists is rather to explain the representational dimension of semantic content--to construe referential relations in terms of inferential ones.

The second part of the book responds to this challenge. Chapter Five explains the expressive role of traditional representational semantic vocabulary. An account is offered there of the use of the sort of expression of which 'true' and 'refers' are paradigmatic. Following the lead of the prosentential approach to truth, the key semantic concept employed in that unified account is anaphora. Chapter Seven then explains anaphoric relations in terms of the substitution-inferential structure of discursive scorekeeping elaborated in Chapter Six. Chapter Six also offers an account in those terms of what it is for claims--which are understood in the first instance (in Chapter Three) as what can serve as premises and conclusions of inferences--to be and be understood to be about objects, and to characterize them as having properties and standing in relations.

The primary treatment of the representational dimension of conceptual content is reserved for Chapter Eight, however. There the representational properties of semantic contents are explained as consequences of the essentially social character of inferential practice. Words such as the 'of' that expresses intentional directedness, and 'about' and 'represents' in their philosophically significant uses, have the expressive role they do--making representational relations explicit--in virtue of the way they figure in *de re* ascriptions of propositional attitudes. These are the tropes used to say explicitly what someone is thinking about, what a belief represents, what a claim is true of. Chapter Eight offers a discursive scorekeeping account of the practices that constitute using locutions to express such *de re* ascriptions, and hence of how expressions must be used in order to mean 'of', 'about', or 'represents'. This account of what is expressed by the fundamental explicitly representational locutions makes possible an

explanation of the objectivity of concepts. It takes the form of a specification of the particular sort of inferential structure social scorekeeping practices must have in order to institute objective norms--norms according to which the correctness of an application of a concept answers to the facts about the object to which it is applied, in such a way that anyone (indeed everyone) in the linguistic community may be wrong about it.

In summary, in the theoretical place usually occupied by the notion of intentional states, the pragmatics presented here elaborates a conception of normative statuses; in the place usually occupied by the notion of intentional interpretation, it puts deontic scorekeeping: the social practices of attributing and acknowledging commitments and entitlements, which implicitly institute those statuses. The theoretical work typically done by semantic assessment according to correctness of representation and satisfaction of truth conditions is done by assessments of proprieties of inference. Semantic articulation is attributed and acknowledged by keeping score not only of directly inferential commitments, which relate sentential (that is, claimable or believable) contents, but also of indirectly inferential substitutional and anaphoric commitments, which relate the subsentential contents of expressions of other grammatical categories.

The pragmatics and semantics maintain particularly intimate relations throughout. The aim is always to show how some bit of vocabulary must be used--the significance its utterance must have in various circumstances, the practical scorekeeping attitudes its usage must elicit and be elicited by--in order for it to express a certain kind of semantic content: to be being taken or treated in practice by the linguistic community as a conditional, a singular term, a bit of normative vocabulary, a propositional attitude ascribing locution, and so on. A fundamental methodological criterion of adequacy of the account is that the theorist not attach semantic contents to expressions by stipulation; it must always be shown how such contents can be conferred on expressions by the scorekeeping activities the theorist attributes to the linguistic practitioners themselves. That is, the aim is to present conditions on an interpretation of a community as discursive scorekeepers that are sufficient (though perhaps not necessary) to ensure that interpreting the community as engaged in those implicitly normative practices is interpreting them as taking or treating their speech acts as expressing the sorts of semantic contents in question.

The obligation to say what it is about the use of locutions in virtue of which they express various sorts of content dictates that the master concept articulating the relation between the pragmatic and semantic portions of the theory is that of expression. To express something is to make it explicit. What is explicit in the fundamental sense has a propositional content--the content of a claim, judgment, or belief (claimable, judgeable, believable contents). That is, making something explicit is saying it: putting it into a form in which it can be given as a reason, and reasons demanded for it. Putting something forward in the explicit form of a claim is the basic move in the game of giving and asking for reasons.

The relation of expression between what is implicit in what practitioners do and what is explicit in what they say structures the story told here at two different levels. At the basic level, the question is how the capacity to entertain principles--and so to know that something is the case--arises out of the capacity to engage in practices--to know how to do something in the sense of being able to do it. What must practitioners be able to do in order to be able thereby to say that things are thus and so, that is, to express something explicitly? The explanatory force of a response to this question can be judged by the constraints that are acknowledged on the

vocabulary in which those practical capacities are specified; normative vocabulary is employed here, but intentional vocabulary (which would permit at the outset the ascription of propositionally contentful states, attitudes, and performances) is not. The first level of the account of expression accordingly consists in explaining--making theoretically explicit--the implicit structure of linguistic practices in virtue of which they count as making anything explicit at all.

The second level of the account of expression consists in working out a theory of the expressive role distinctive of logical vocabulary. The claim is that logical vocabulary is distinguished by its function of expressing explicitly within a language the features of the use of that language that confer conceptual contents on the states, attitudes, performances, and expressions whose significances are governed by those practices. Conditionals serve as a paradigm illustrating this expressive role. According to the inferential approach to semantics and the deontic scorekeeping approach to pragmatics, practitioners confer determinate propositional contents on states and expressions in part by their scorekeeping practice of treating the acknowledgement of one doxastic commitment (typically through assertional utterance of a sentence) as having the pragmatic significance of an undertaking of further commitments that are related to the original commitment as its inferential consequences. At the basic level, treating the claim expressed by one sentence as an inferential consequence of the claim expressed by another sentence is something practitioners can do, and it is because such practical attitudes can be implicit in the way they respond to each other's performances that their sentences come to mean what they do. With the introduction of conditional locutions linking sentences, however, comes the expressive power to say explicitly that one claim is a consequence of another. The expressive role distinctive of conditionals is making implicit inferential commitments explicit in the form of declarative sentences--sentences the assertion of which acknowledges a propositionally contentful doxastic commitment. In a similar way, at the basic level, scorekeepers can treat the claims expressed by two sentences as incompatible: namely by treating commitment to one as in practice precluding entitlement to the other. The introduction of a locution with the expressive power of negation makes it possible to express such implicit practical scorekeeping attitudes explicitly--by saying that two claims are incompatible (one entails the negation of the other). Identity and quantificational expressions are analyzed on this model as making explicit the substitutional relations characteristic of singular terms and predicates respectively, and further locutions are considered that play a corresponding expressive role in making anaphoric relations explicit.

So an expressive theory of logic is presented here. On this view, the philosophical significance of logic is not that it enables those who master the use of logical locutions to prove a special class of claims--that is, to entitle themselves to a class of commitments in a formally privileged fashion. The significance of logical vocabulary lies rather in what it lets those who master it say--the special class of claims it enables them to express. Logical vocabulary endows practitioners with the expressive power to make explicit as the contents of claims just those implicit features of linguistic practice that confer semantic contents on their utterances in the first place. Logic is the organ of semantic self-consciousness. It brings out into the light of day the practical attitudes that determine the conceptual contents members of a linguistic community are able to express--putting them in the form of explicit claims, which can be debated, for which reasons can be given and alternatives proposed and assessed. The formation of concepts--by means of which practitioners can come to be aware of anything at all--comes itself to be something of which those who can deploy logical vocabulary can be aware. Since

plans can be addressed to, and intentional practical influenced exercised over, just those features of things of which agents can become explicitly aware by the application of concepts, the formation of concepts itself becomes in this way for the first time an object of conscious deliberation and control.

Explaining the features of the use of logical vocabulary that confer its characteristic sort of semantic content is accordingly explaining how the sort of expressive power the theorist requires to explain the features of the use of nonlogical vocabulary that confer semantic content on it can become available to those whose linguistic practice is being theorized about. It is this fact that sets the expressive scope of the project pursued here. The aim is twofold: to make explicit deontic scorekeeping social practices that suffice to confer conceptual contents on nonlogical sentences, singular terms, and predicates in general, and to make explicit the deontic scorekeeping social practices in virtue of which vocabulary can be introduced as playing the expressive roles characteristic of a variety of particular logical locutions. How much logical vocabulary is worth reconstructing in this fashion? In this project, neither more nor less than is required to make explicit within the language the deontic scorekeeping social practices that suffice to confer conceptual contents on nonlogical vocabulary in general. At that point it will have been specified what practices a theorist must attribute to a community in order to be interpreting its members as engaging not just in specifically linguistic practices, but in linguistic practices that endow them with sufficient expressive power to say how their practices confer conceptual content on their states, attitudes, performances, and expressions. That is, they will be able to express the theory offered here.

To make the semantic theory explicit requires logical vocabulary capable of expressing inferential, substitutional, and anaphoric relations. This vocabulary corresponds pretty well to the language of standard first order logic, with the addition of classical semantic vocabulary. To make the pragmatic theory explicit requires logical vocabulary expressing the endorsement of norms generally, and the attribution and acknowledgement of the deontic statuses of commitment and entitlement in particular. The discussion of action in Chapter Four includes an account of the use of vocabulary that makes norms explicit, and Chapter Eight explains how the social practical attitudes of attributing and acknowledging deontic statuses (paradigmatically doxastic commitment) are made explicit by the use of propositional attitude ascribing locutions such as the regimented "...is committed to the claim that...", which does duty here for "...believes that...". Along this expressive dimension, the project eats its own tail, or lifts itself up by its own bootstraps--presenting an explanation of what it is to say something that is powerful enough to explain what it itself is saying.

Interpreting the members of a community as engaging in specifically discursive practices, according to the view put forward here, is interpreting them as engaging in social practices that include treating some performances as having the pragmatic significance of assertions. For it is in terms of the constellation of inferentially articulated commitments and entitlements characteristic of the making (staking) of claims that the notion of specifically propositional contentfulness is to be understood. Since all other varieties of conceptual contentfulness derive (substitutionally) from the propositional, this is to say that the application of concepts is a linguistic affair--not in the sense that one must be talking in order to do it, but in the sense that one must be a player of the essentially linguistic game of giving and asking for reasons in order to be able to do it. There can be sets of practices that are linguistic in this sense, but that do not incorporate the expressive resources provided by logical vocabulary. Indeed, the way the use of such vocabulary in making explicit what is implicit in the use of

nonlogical vocabulary is specified is by showing what would be required to introduce vocabulary with that expressive function into idioms that did not already contain it. The contribution made by logical locutions to the reflective processes in virtue of which the evolution of our concepts and commitments qualifies as rational is so important, however, that linguistic practices that at least permit their introduction form a special class. In a weak sense, any being that engages in linguistic practices, and hence applies concepts is a rational being; in the strong sense, rational beings are not only linguistic beings, but at least potentially also logical beings. This is how we should understand ourselves: as beings that meet this dual expressive condition.

It turns out that there is a surprising connection between being a rational creature--in the sense that includes the possibility of using the expressive resources of specifically logical vocabulary to reflect on one's conceptual content-conferring linguistic practices--on the one hand, and the structure of the facts that make up the world one can become aware of by applying those concepts, on the other. Rational beings live in a world of properties and related particulars. Chapter Six presents an expressive deduction of the necessity of this structure; it shows not why there is something rather than nothing, but why what there is must come in the form of things; it shows why judgments or beliefs--the commitments expressed by claims--must in the basic case be about particulars, paradigmatically objects, and their properties and relations.

Particular objects are what is referred to by singular terms, and the demonstration proceeds by showing that the only semantically significant subsentential structure that is compatible with the introduction of logical vocabulary is one that decomposes basic sentences into singular terms and predicates. This would not be a surprising result if the logical vocabulary appealed to included identity and quantificational locutions, for (it will be argued) these have precisely the expressive role of making explicit in the form of claims the substitution-inferential commitments characteristic of singular terms and predicates. But the result presented here is much stronger: any discursive practices that permit the introduction even of sentential logical operators such as negation and conditionals require that any subsentential substitutional structure be of the term-predicate variety. Thus the investigation of the nature and limits of the explicit expression in principles of what is implicit in discursive practices yields a powerful transcendental argument--a formal answer to the question "Why are there objects?" that turns on a deep relation between the expressive capacities required to think critically about the inferential connections among claims and the structures in virtue of which those claims are properly understood as characterizing objects as having properties and standing in relations.

This is a long book. Its length is a consequence of the demands made by its governing methodological aspirations: to eschew representational primitives, to show how content is related to use, and to achieve self-referential expressive completeness. The first is pursued by elaborating inferentialist and expressivist alternatives to the representationalist idiom for thinking and talking about thinking and talking that has been so well worked-out over the last three centuries. The aim is not to replace that familiar idiom, but to enrich it. The promised enrichment is of two sorts. First, there is the greater depth of field afforded by the stereoscopic vision made available by an alternative to familiar ways of talking about intentional phenomena. Second, there is the grounding and illumination of representational tropes secured by displaying the implicit features of discursive practice that are expressed explicitly by their

use. Doing this requires that both the pragmatics and the semantics be developed in a reasonable amount of detail. The account of norm-instituting social practices must appeal to capacities that are plausibly available in primitive prelinguistic cases, and yet provide raw materials adequate for the specification of sophisticated linguistic practices, including logical ones. The account of the semantic contents conferred by those practices must encompass expressions of grammatical categories that are reasonably well-understood already within the representationalist tradition--e.g. predicates, definite descriptions, proper names, familiar sorts of logical expressions, and whatever other kinds of locutions are required to make the processes by which content is conferred explicit within the linguistic practices being modelled.

Chapters Three and Four present the core theory--the model according to which a pragmatics specifying the social practices in which conceptual norms are implicit and a broadly inferential semantics are combined. It is here that sufficient conditions are put forward for the practices a community is interpreted as engaging in to count as according performances the pragmatic significance characteristic of assertions--and hence for those practices to count as conferring specifically propositional contents. Everything else in the book either leads up to the presentation of this model, or elaborates and extracts consequences from it. These chapters can be read on their own; the cost of omitting the first two chapters, which motivate the approach to pragmatics and semantics pursued there (in part by a rational reconstruction of the history of discussions of conceptual norms and contents), is that without this conceptual and historical background one won't understand why things are done as they are there, rather than in some more familiar way. On the other hand, the time spent developing that motivation means that one must wait a while for the actual theory to show itself.

The cost of missing Part Two (Chapters Five through Eight), would be largely that one would then not see what the model can do, what it is good for. The most essential bit is Chapter Eight, for that is where the representational dimension of discursive practice is explained in terms of the interaction of the social and the inferential articulation of the communication of reasons for belief and action. It is this interaction that is appealed to there also to make intelligible how objective norms come to apply to the essentially social statuses--paradigmatically the doxastic and practical propositionally contentful commitments that correspond to beliefs and intentions--and so underwrite such fundamental practices as assessing the truth of beliefs and the success of actions. The next most important part of the second half of the book is Chapter Six: the substitutional analysis is crucial to understanding how the inferential approach can generalize beyond sentences. And it would be truly a shame to miss the transcendental expressive argument for the existence of objects--the argument that (and why) the only form the world we talk and think of can take is that of a world of facts about particular objects and their properties and relations. It is worth keeping in mind Diderot's thought that one "must have gone deep into art or science to master their elements...The darkness of the beginnings lights up only toward the middle or the end."

The aim throughout is to present a unified vision of language and mind--one that starts with a relatively clear philosophical rationale and works it out in convincing detail, addressing a sufficiently wide range of potentially puzzling phenomena to engender confidence in its adaptability and power. It is animated by the ideal of the systematic philosophers of old: the invigorating clarifying prospect achievable by laying alongside our ordinary ways of talking and thinking an alternate idiom in which everything can be said. I am sensible, of course, of many ways in which this product falls short of that ideal. Particularly in matters of detail (but by no means there alone), a myriad of choices have had to be made at the cost of spurning

attractive, perhaps ultimately superior alternatives. The approach seldom dictates just one way of doing things. Yet the choice of which large limb to follow off the trunk of the tradition must be made on the basis of the tempting fruit to be seen on the smaller branches it supports. It can only be hoped that where upon closer inspection some of them are found wanting, the fundamental soundness of the tree is not impugned, but only the judgment of the gardener, who pruned the better and nurtured the worse. As Johnson says in the Preface to his Dictionary: A large work is difficult because it is large, even though all its parts might singly be performed with facility; where there are many things to be done, each must be allowed its share of time and labor in the proportion only which it bears to the whole; nor can it be expected that the stones which form the dome of the temple should be squared and polished like the diamond of a ring.

Truth may or may not be in the whole, but understanding surely is.