

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

U·M·I

University Microfilms International
A Bell & Howell Information Company
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
313-761-4700 800-521-0600

Order Number 9431373

**Meaning and social facts: Interpretation in the Black speech
community**

Thompson, Stephen Lester, Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1994

Copyright ©1994 by Thompson, Stephen Lester. All rights reserved.

U·M·I
300 N. Zeeb Rd.
Ann Arbor, MI 48106

MEANING AND SOCIAL FACTS
INTERPRETATION IN THE BLACK SPEECH COMMUNITY

by

STEPHEN L. THOMPSON

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Philosophy
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

1994

© 1994

STEPHEN L. THOMPSON

All Rights Reserved

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Philosophy in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

5/4/94
Date

Stephen Schiffer
Chair of Examining Committee

May 4, 1994
Date

Zukowski
Executive Officer

Frank Kirkland

Stephen Schiffer
Stephen Schiffer

William James Earle

Alex Orenstein

Charles Landesman

Supervisory Committee

ABSTRACT

MEANING AND SOCIAL FACTS

INTERPRETATION IN THE BLACK SPEECH COMMUNITY

by STEPHEN L. THOMPSON

Advisor: Professor Frank Kirkland

Attempts within sociolinguistics to model the African American speech community require a sound account of what a competent participant knows when they give correct interpretations of utterances made within such a community, a phenomenon any larger theory of language use ought to address. To provide this account, I reconstruct a line of argument from the philosophical history of discussions on African American speech communities. I give this history in terms of pragmatic arguments, that is, in terms of the ability of vernacular speakers to manage the "slip" between speaker meaning and conventional meaning so as to effectively communicate, and thus be interpretable to competent auditors.

In the writings of African American philosophers Alexander Crummell (1819-1898) and Alain Locke (1885-1954) especially, the general pragmatic strategy is to take the regulative background of speech acts to play a central role in vernacular interpretation, particularly as it relates language use to patterns of interpretation available to a speech community (Crummell) and to communicative aspects of the socialization of members of that community (Locke). In terms of meaning, interpretation is seen by Crummell as a function of publicly accessible meaning; he endorses the claim that the content which a word expresses is an idea in the mind of a speaker—what I call the Semantic Identity Thesis. Locke's insight, however, that cognitive meaning and content-bearing linguistic vehicles can be assessed independently provides him with the leverage to treat (private) speaker meaning and (conventional) symbol meaning as distinct components of a speaker's competence to successfully interpret utterances—what I call the Semantic Distance Thesis.

Using these accounts to model inferences in communication, I argue that a complete account of interpretation will show how a speaker accesses inferential, conventional and social knowledge. These sorts of knowledge are tied to the prevailing norms emerging from a regulative background for communication within the language use of a speech community. In this way, the slip between conventional meaning and speaker meaning can be understood as structuring the communicative

context of vernacular speech, in that social knowledge plays a central role in effective interpretive inference.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the assistance I received regarding the ideas contained within this dissertation as well as the administrative gymnastics required for it to see the light of microfilm.

Thanks are due first of all to the Minority Access/Graduate Networking (MAGNET) Program at the Graduate School, which sponsored the writing with a generous dissertation fellowship covering the 1993-1994 academic year. Pam Reid and Matt Schoengood, along with the other MAGNET students, created a remarkable space for those of us struggling to write and think. Pam and Matt, along with Floyd Moreland and Sharon Lerner of Student Affairs, are also to be thanked for helping clear administrative hurdles in scheduling the defense. Thanks are long past due to Dean Harrison, who saw to it that I received support throughout my years at the City University.

Thanks are also due to the departments of philosophy at Howard University, Bloomsburg University, Hamline University, Seattle University, and Georgia Southern University, each of which invited me to present papers which were subsequently incorporated into this dissertation. The Society for the

Study of Black Philosophy also graciously invited me to present a paper on Locke which formed part of the basis of chapter four. Eliot Weiniger of the editorial board of the journal Found Object was also helpful in tailoring the argument in chapter three. Of course, the students in my courses at Pratt Institute and Hunter College are to be collectively thanked for allowing me to test early versions of arguments in my in-class lectures.

Rosemarie Ianuzzi deserves thanks for years of administrative work within the Philosophy Department, enabling my myriad unconventional requests to find their way through bureaucratic logic. With the help of Arthur Collins and Richard Mendelsohn, she made my moderately successful graduate career possible (or at least much less impossible).

My examining committee was especially cooperative in participating in a defense which had to be scheduled sooner rather than later; special thanks are thus extended to Steve Schiffer, who chaired the exam and saw to it that it happened within a reasonable time frame. His patience as I struggled with the nuances of issues in the theory of meaning and vernacular speech allowed me to develop my own views beyond what might otherwise have been possible. I look forward to fruitful exchanges with him on these issues in the future. Bill Earle helped me develop an enhanced sensitivity to issues of power in communication; as I prepare this essay for publication, I expect to pursue these issues further. Alex Orenstein

gave me helpful suggestions for addressing the literature on metaphor and indirect speech acts—natural directions for this work—and Jim Landesman suggested how I might treat historical figures like Crummell in as scholarly a fashion as possible. Marx Wartofsky and Ana Celia Zentella, both of whom read and responded to the prospectus of the dissertation, helped focus my thoughts at that crucial stage of developing the argument.

Of course, the project is what it is because of the guidance of an ideal mentor, Frank Kirkland. Frank proved ideal in every sense: an untiring advocate of the project, a sensitive reader of the literature on Locke and Crummell who knew what mattered and what didn't, an amazingly available advisor who always had time (or made it when he didn't have it) to talk, read, respond.

A number of other mentors and scholars contributed to the forming of the ideas in this dissertation, whether through conversation, friendship, or both: John Schumacher, George Yudice, John Dore, Vicky Bergvall, Tommy Lott and Jürgen Habermas. A number of friends and fellow students helped me develop my thoughts as well: Eddy Souffrant, Ron Winley, Russell Dale, Adam Vinueza, Gary Ostertag and Andy Kahan.

My family deserves a very special note of thanks. To support a son who found stimulation and purpose in what must have seemed like a vacuous intellectual pursuit through too

many years of schooling is absolutely remarkable. My father, Harvey Thompson, taught me the value of patient, hard work, and my mother, Hildegard Waldhutter Thompson, taught me the importance of treating obstacles as opportunities to display strength rather than as excuses for defeat. Were she alive today, I believe she would be as pleased with my pursuits as my father seems to be. Sisters and brother who have helped nurture my unending curiosity: Marilyn Thompson, Angelika Thompson, Shirley Raynis, Julie Caldwell, Sylvie Platt, Fred Thompson, Claudia Ianucci, and Christine Daniels.

Finally, an overdue acknowledgment of thanks to my companion, Ligia Römer. I can't imagine a more fruitful relationship: as a philosopher herself, she has provided insights and arguments (and counter-arguments) that helped me weed out what would unravel the cogency I sought; as an emotional partner, she has consistently helped me keep my focus and passion. Her intellectual and emotional support through this process has been singularly responsible for my being able to write the dissertation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	vii
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 An Overview of the Argument of the Dissertation.	
1.2 Empirical Studies on African American Vernacular Speech.	
2. MEANING AND VERNACULAR SPEECH	15
2.1 How Are Interpretation and Competence Related?	
2.2 Speaker Meaning and Conventional Meaning.	
2.3 Background and Communication.	
3. MEANING AND ONTOLOGY IN ALEXANDER CRUMMELL	33
3.1 An Overview of the Argument of the Chapter.	
3.2 The Semantic Identity Thesis in Nineteenth Century Philosophy.	
3.3 Grammar and Meaning in the Speech Community: The Argument from "Civilization."	
3.4 Semantic and Pragmatic Problems.	
3.5 The Speech Community and Interpretive Resources.	
4. MEANING AND COMMUNICATION IN ALAIN LOCKE	64
4.1 An Overview of the Argument of the Chapter.	
4.2 Realism and Anti-foundationalism in Locke.	
4.3 Speaker Meaning and Symbol Meaning: The Semantic Distance Thesis.	
4.4 Semantic and Pragmatic Problems.	
4.5 Speaker Meaning, Symbol Meaning and Social Facts.	

5.	MEANING AND SOCIAL FACTS	95
5.1	An Overview of the Argument of the Chapter.	
5.2	How Is Background Social Knowledge Regulative?	
5.3	Meaning, Understanding and the Regulative Back- ground.	
5.4	Social Facts and Inference.	
6.	CONCLUSION	122
6.1	Benefits for Sociolinguistic Research.	
6.2	Benefits for Research on Current Issues in Phi- losophy.	
6.3	Benefits for African American Philosophy and the History of Philosophy.	
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	129

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 / AN OVERVIEW OF THE ARGUMENT OF THE DISSERTATION

Chapters one and two.—Sociolinguistic studies of vernacular speech patterns, such as those by W. Labov,¹ W. Stewart,² and J. L. Dillard,³ among others, raise as both a theoretical and an empirical question the communicative competence of speakers within the African American vernacular speech community. In order to properly treat this issue, these studies require a sound account of what a competent participant has to know in order to give correct interpreta-

¹Language in the Inner City: Studies in the Black English Vernacular (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972a); also his "Rules for Ritual Insults," in Rap-pin' and Stylin' Out: Communication in Urban Black America, edited by T. Kochman (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1972b).

²For example, his "Creole Languages in the Caribbean," in Study of the Role of Second Languages in Asia, Africa and Latin America, edited by F. A. Rice (Washington DC, 1962).

³Black English: Its History and Usage in the United States (New York: Vintage Books of Random House, 1972).

tions of utterances made within such a community, since interpreting utterances is a central phenomenon any larger theory of language use ought to address. When it is clear just what it means for an auditor to correctly interpret a speaker's utterance, then patterns of utterance interpretation, as well as the context and capacity for those patterns, can be explained. Such an account is therefore necessary for providing answers to the sorts of important questions these studies have been designed to address, such as how members of a vernacular speech community are to be considered communicatively competent, and how social roles make available various forms of language for speakers to use.

In this dissertation I want to say what a sound account of interpretation should capture. My project is motivated by two considerations: (1) I know of no sustained attempt to analyze the relevant conceptual issues in interpretation which also takes seriously the deeply communicative dimensions of language use which vernacular speech exemplifies, nor (2) do I know of any research program currently investigating African American speech communities which also self-consciously continues the history of philosophical discussion on that community. To help close these two gaps in the scholarly literature, I seek two aims for this dissertation: to reconstruct a strand of argument from the philosophical history of current discussions of African American speech communities, and to use that reconstruction in order to account for what

speakers must know in order to give correct interpretations in communication.

I treat a central issue these studies raise in these introductory chapters. I discuss the sorts of knowledge by which correct interpretations become available to speakers. Taking seriously the claim that successful interpretation (at least in vernacular situations) requires access by communicative participants to knowledge about social facts, I show that the gap between speaker meaning and conventional meaning provides a logical lacuna in which to locate social facts. From that starting point, I go on to explore the case of vernacular speech so as to indicate how speakers avail themselves of these different kinds of meaning in linguistic practices. I position the problem, then, in terms of the ability of vernacular speakers to manage the "slip" between speaker meaning and conventional meaning in order to effectively communicate, and thus be interpretable to competent auditors.

In that opening discussion, I follow a lead from the sociolinguist J. J. Gumperz⁴ and the anthropologist D. Hymes⁵

⁴"Sociocultural Knowledge in Conversational Inference," in Georgetown University Round Table on Languages and Linguistics, edited by M. Saviile-Troike (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 1977).

⁵Language in Culture and Society (New York, 1964); "Competence and Performance in Linguistic Theory," in Language Acquisition: Models and Methods, edited by R. Huxley & E. Ingram (London: Academic Press, 1971); "On Communicative Competence," in Sociolinguistics, edited by J. B. Pride & J. Holmes (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1972a); "Models of the

to show how communicative "background" knowledge—the knowledge of social facts about communicative participants—to be available to speakers. While these writers don't apply this idea to vernacular speech as such, I explore how this connection could be made. In fact, following a different lead from J. Habermas,⁶ I suggest that analyzing background knowledge will in fact be important in accounting for what goes on in vernacular interpretation. The sociolinguistic insights I consider here are thus useful for highlighting ways that interpretation might involve the knowledge which standard accounts generally suggest. What's lacking, however, is any sustained logical and pragmatic analysis of that knowledge. That sort of analysis would show just how those facts which background knowledge has access to bear on interpretive inferences. Since we lack this analysis, we have little precise idea how background knowledge might complete a sound account of interpretation. I conclude the introductory chapters by

Interactions of Language and Social Life.," in Directions in Sociolinguistics, edited by J. J. Gumperz & D. Hymes (New York, 1972b).

⁶"What is Universal Pragmatics?" in Communication and the Evolution of Society, translated by T. McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979); The Theory of Communicative Action: Reason and the Rationalization of Society, vol. I., translated by T. McCarthy (Boston: Beacon, 1984); The Theory of Communicative Action: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason, vol. II, translated by T. McCarthy (Boston: Beacon, 1987); Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays, translated by W. M. Hohengarten (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1992).

saying what such an analysis has to address to be successful; specifically, I indicate that speakers interpret successfully when they can access a social knowledge consisting in social facts such as the social roles of speaker and auditor, as well as the language use entitlements those roles confer upon speakers. This will provide the starting point for the rest of the argument of the dissertation, in which I systematically develop an analysis of social knowledge in terms of the distinction between speaker meaning and conventional meaning. I begin that analysis by exploring part of the history of philosophical writing on the African American speech community.

Chapters three and four.—The arguments of African American intellectuals A. Crummell (b. 1819, d. 1898) and A. Locke (b. 1885, d. 1954) address language use, constituting a history of philosophical attempts to address the analytical issues I have just indicated. I reconstruct their arguments in these two chapters in order to establish that history and to show what lines such an analysis (which I pursue in chapter five) should take.

In chapter three, I explore Crummell's sustained attempt to argue that the African American speech community be modeled according to a British empiricist theory of communication, on which semantic correspondence between cognitive elements ("ideas") and linguistic elements ("words") gives speakers access to conventional meanings of utterances, enabling successful interpretation. The spin Crummell gives to

this essentially Benthamite account is an ontolinguistic premise, by which I mean the view that semantic correspondence is available to the extent that cognitive and linguistic resources are available to speech communities qua racial groups. Speech interpretation is thus tied (1) to sociolinguistic features of the speech community as well as (2) to the ethical status of the "race" understood in a deep ontological sense. A distinctive feature of Crummell's account of interpretation is that he disparages vernacular speech in favor of standard dialects, despite the fact that he recognizes the communicative powers vernacular language use exemplifies. Interpretation is seen by Crummell as a function of publicly accessible meaning, standing in an identity relation to a speaker's private meaning—what I call the Semantic Identity Thesis. Because, however, he fails to account for speaker meaning on his analysis, he misses how speakers use language to change meanings, for instance, or how they can cognitively stretch (so to speak) the work their words do. For this sort of reason Crummell disparages vernacular speech.

In chapter four, I continue this line of argument in Locke, making explicit his insight that kinds of meaning can be assessed independently. The leverage this move gives to a treatment of linguistic interpretation consists in the ability to treat (private) speaker meaning and (conventional) symbol meaning as distinct components of a speaker's competence to successfully interpret utterances—what I call the Semantic Distance Thesis. In this way Locke can come to see

vernacular communication and culture as rich enough to cognitively deliver what speakers and auditors need to successfully negotiate the distinct kinds of meaning, and thus be competent to interpret.

Chapters five and six.—In these concluding chapters I revisit the original question of knowledge in interpretive situations, building on the insights gathered from both Locke and Crummell. I work up an expansion of their accounts, whereby inferences are modeled from the perspective of an account of the kinds of knowledge speakers and auditors must have access to. Specifically, I argue that a complete account of interpretation will show how a speaker accesses inferential, conventional and social knowledge. These sorts of knowledge are tied to the prevailing norms emerging from a regulative background for communication within the language use of a speech community. In this way, the slip between conventional meaning and speaker meaning can be understood as structuring the communicative context of vernacular speech, in that social knowledge plays a central role in effective interpretive inference.

My study thus shows one way that social facts enter inference. Based on this result, philosophy can further clarify the nature of social inference in linguistic communication, perhaps as part of a theory of situation or information. Sociolinguistics, likewise, can further investigate the particular competences to manage such inferences exemplified in actual speech communities, with an eye toward modeling speech

communities along lines of social knowledge, both in its construction and its protection. The third distinct benefit from my study is more purely scholarly, showing how work on the history of philosophy can approach figures in the African American tradition which have heretofore been overlooked in such pursuits. Conversely, work on the African American tradition can be expanded and complemented by the focus I bring on issues in the theory of language.

1.2 / EMPIRICAL STUDIES ON AFRICAN AMERICAN VERNACULAR SPEECH

Within sociolinguistic research since at least the 1960s, there has been a great deal of interest in how members of the African American speech community use language. Empirical research on African American vernacular speech, for instance, has tried to establish the communicative competence of speakers as part of a larger research project to linguistically model the vernacular speech community.⁷ For instance, Labov has shown that the logic of (what was then called) "Nonstandard Negro English" is evident in the reconstructed

⁷Both Labov and Kochman especially. These researchers aside, I recognize that historically many such attempts have been undertaken to question whether speakers in the African American community even have a language, or whether they can cognitively manage grammars so as to communicate competently. I take such questions to be settled at the outset of this essay; if communication is what's going on among speakers, I take it as axiomatic that language is what's being used in such processes, and thus that effective cognitive management is controlling that usage.

grammatical knowledge by speakers of that dialect. By reconstructing this logic in the form of rules of grammar, as well as in the norms of what utterances are to be counted as acceptable by auditors, Labov tries to demonstrate that speakers possess complex and sophisticated linguistic tools for effective, rational communication. Labov's work is largely intended to dissipate the then-current view that African American children possess no tools for clear thought; "ghetto kids," it was commonly argued in the literature, had no language or logic. Of course—especially in the kind of argument I'm advancing—his work has broader theoretical importance.

Both Labov and Kochman analyze communicative norms employed in African American language practices, such as signifying and ritual insult. Signifying, according to one often cited definition, is a technique for using language to indirectly argue, persuade or even trick, particularly by employing stories with symbolic characters.⁸ Ritual insult includes a variety of linguistic games in which speakers insult auditors in a manner orchestrated in terms of conventions of linguistic use (rhyming, rhythm, word order) as well as what is to count as a proper object of the insults themselves (typically the auditor's female relations, especially for

⁸R. D. Abrahams, Deep Down in the Jungle: Negro Narrative Folklore from the Streets of Philadelphia (Hatboro, PA: Pennsylvania Folklore Associates, 1964), pp. 51, 52, 66, 67, 264; H. L. Gates, The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 53, 54.

male participants). The fact that these norms exist, are available to communicative participants in the vernacular speech community, and are followed in successful linguistic performances, indicates the extent to which language use and linguistic practices exhibit sophisticated communicatively rational tools.

By emphasizing these aspects of linguistic practice as part of a model of African American language use, a variety of problems may be investigated: for instance, how do bidialectal speakers manage different grammars? That is, if a speaker controls the dialect in which these patterns are used, what's going on linguistically when they switch to other dialects? This is especially pertinent if, as is now the consensus among sociolinguists, dialects controlled in the African American speech community can indeed be said to have grammars. A related theoretical question can likewise be asked about how bidialectal speakers enter into communication with speakers who primarily control other dialects. Among more practical concerns is the issue of how children who primarily control the African American vernacular dialect should be educated in a primarily standard dialect environment. Other sets of questions may be raised about how speakers of a dialect succeed in being understood, despite the myriad ways in which speakers—particularly of vernacular dialects—avail themselves of inventive uses of meaning.

Each of these questions issues from cognitive, developmental and social concerns with how speakers of a dialect in-

teract in contexts where at least one other dialect is spoken—perhaps even in a prestige/stigmatized relation, as it is for speakers of the African American vernacular in American society. Complicating matters is the well-known fact that such speakers commonly develop communicative competence in a standard dialect as well. They thus move competently among dialects in communication of all sorts. The link between these questions and the sociolinguistic investigations of Labov and Kochman is that, to the extent that using dialectally marked language is a rule governed and norm conforming linguistic practice, cognitive dimensions of language use, particularly those uses which vary phonologically, grammatically and lexically across speech communities (as dialects do, by definition) attest to the communicative competence of speakers of the dialect. Competence can be tied in this way to dialect-specific (local) capabilities, rather than remaining simply at the (global) level of natural language use.

By showing context sensitivity in communication, the focus shifts to the sorts of context sensitive knowledge participants in communication have to have access to in order to correctly interpret utterances. The empirical work unfortunately doesn't enjoy an established theoretical base, as there is no well-worked out analysis of this issue.

Moreover, there is no clear understanding of the theoretical significance of formality and vernacular usage: what knowledge do speakers have to have access to in order to understand specifically vernacular speech? If a preacher, for

instance, switches to a vernacular speech pattern to make a point in a sermon, to whom does the preacher become more understandable, and why? And who else, by virtue of the switch to the vernacular, actually fails to understand? Perhaps more at bottom is the issue of what the switch indicates to a sophisticated audience, made up of speakers of the vernacular as well as the standard dialect of English: what significance is there for how they are to understand this preacher, given the switch? The bidialectal question I raise earlier resurfaces here in my example, but with a slightly different emphasis: what significance is there to a bidialectal auditor for how they are to understand a bidialectal speaker who switches from one dialect to another? More precisely: what sort of context sensitive knowledge do such speakers and auditors need have access to in order to understand the meanings of utterances and (in turn) to be understood?

The issue of being bidialectal is both substantive and pertinent: substantive, because it is a common empirical phenomenon in the vernacular speech community; pertinent, since this sort of switch involves precisely the competences at issue in interpretive theory, and should thus be explained by an adequate linguistic model of the community.

While there is no well-worked out analysis of context sensitivity in research on vernacular speech, there is wide agreement among linguists that general communicative competence involves a speaker's tacit knowledge and skill to both understand and produce utterances which are structurally

well-formed, referentially accurate, and contextually appropriate.⁹ Context is widely taken to be relevant to modeling and assessing speaker competences. What the more theoretical work in sociolinguistics needs—but lacks—is an analysis of interpretation, since it is on a sound account of interpretation that answers will be forthcoming to a variety of important questions in these studies, including what a vernacular speech community is, and how members of it are to be considered competent. Competence isn't simply a skill in an opaque relation to, for instance, processes of conversational inference. We presently lack an account which makes relations of this sort clear.

When it is clear just what it means for an auditor to correctly interpret a speaker's utterance, then patterns of utterance interpretation, as well as the context and capacity for those patterns, can be explained. Research on vernacular, given this account, can then proceed to assess competences to interpret which shed light on broader communicative competences, including rule following, role playing and norm conforming.

This overview of the empirical issues sets up a closer discussion of how the issues can be approached more theoretically. That discussion, which I undertake in chapter two, ex-

⁹S. J. Savignon, Communicative Competence: Theory and Classroom Practice (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1983); R. L. Schiefelbusch, ed, "Editor's Introduction," in Language Competence: Assessment and Intervention (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1986).

plores just how the issue of interpretation is impacted by phenomena associated with vernacular speech. Specifically, I will show that the case of vernacular usage serves as a highly suggestive case for the most promising standard philosophical approaches to interpretation.

CHAPTER 2

MEANING AND VERNACULAR SPEECH

In this chapter I continue discussing the problem of interpretation, but in a more philosophical direction. My focus is on how the case of vernacular speech serves to highlight—even expand—what the standard theoretical approaches to interpretation capture. Taking seriously the claim that successful interpretation (at least in vernacular situations) requires access by communicative participants to knowledge about social facts, I intend to show that the gap between speaker meaning and conventional meaning provides a logical lacuna in which to locate social facts. This chapter is intended to clarify some of the conceptual geography around this issue; positions with respect to this geography, particularly those appearing in the African American tradition, constitute the substance of the remainder of the dissertation.

2.1 / HOW ARE INTERPRETATION AND COMPETENCE RELATED?

Let me begin by showing how competence and interpretation hover in logical space. Recent discussions in competence theory begin with N. Chomsky,¹ who advocates that language research take as among its central data the faithful reconstructions of the native linguistic intuitions of idealized speakers. He bases this orientation (in part) on his view that competence is the ability to understand "sentences," where "sentences" denote a string of words considered abstractly. They thus differ from "utterances," for instance, in that the latter denote sentences in use.² Chomsky argues that linguistic competences are basic to more derivative communicative competences, so interpreting utterances—sentences in communicative use—is possible when an auditor knows deep semantic structures in virtue of that auditor's underlying grammatical competences.³ Chomsky's program is explicitly a theory of the grammatical competence of idealized speakers

¹Aspects of a Theory of Syntax (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1965).

²No questions need be begged here regarding the distinction between pragmatics and semantics. All that is required is to recognize that sentences bear meaning, as do utterances; whether and how that meaning is shared or commonly derivable is another point. See for example S. C. Levinson, Pragmatics (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 5-34 for a discussion of a similar point.

³Note that this need not involve any ontological difficulties; "deep" character can be understood in terms of a concept's position in a theory, rather than in terms of its ontology.

which inherits (instructively, as my discussion in chapter three makes evident) the concerns of nineteenth century grammar theory.⁴

D. Hymes, on the other hand, has advocated moving away from idealized speaker's intuitions to those of actual speakers in social interaction. Interpreting utterances requires knowing general communicative parameters, which include the formal possibility (grammaticality) of utterances, their feasibility, and their appropriateness. Given his emphasis on actual speakers, Hymes is helpful in recognizing that the concept of competence can be extended to how speakers manage vernacular and not simply standard forms.⁵

Recently, a number of linguists have emphasized the importance of contextual factors in competence. J. Dore,⁶ for instance, distinguishes analytical criteria for evaluating linguistic competence (grammatical well-formedness, meaningfulness of semantic content, and propositional truth) and pragmatic criteria for evaluating communicative competence (appropriateness of speech use in context, effectiveness of

⁴See Chomsky's preface and chapter one of Aspects especially.

⁵This isn't entirely speculative on my part. Besides the conceptual connections I am making explicit, there is textual support for reading Hymes on informal speech. See especially D. Hymes, "Competence and Performance in Linguistic Theory," in Language Acquisition: Models and Methods, ed. by R. Huxley & E. Ingram (London: Academic Press, 1971), pp. 3-28.

⁶"The Development of Conversational Competence," in Language Competence: Assessment and Intervention, edited by R. L. Schiefelbusch (Boston: Little, Brown & Co, 1986).

utterance, and accountability to making sense, maintaining consensus, and the like). S. J. Savignon⁷ also goes a long way toward showing how competences are multi-dimensional, including both the strict grammaticality of produced utterances and a variety of contextual factors in interpretation. She distinguishes linguistic competence based on reconstructed (Chomskyan) native intuitions, captured in grammatical competence; sociolinguistic competence based on understanding the social context of utterances, captured in rules of appropriateness; discourse competence, which is the ability to connect sets of sentences into coherent wholes, thereby discerning organizational patterns in discourse; and strategic competence based on strategies to compensate for inadequate competences, which can include paraphrase, register and style shifts, avoidance, and circumlocution.⁸

These linguists and anthropologists, from Chomsky through Savignon, illuminate the main issues an account of interpretation has to contend with, particularly given the notion of competence. However, what remains is some thorough account of how interpretations depend on these various kinds of knowledge, especially how this knowledge is exploited in vernacular situations. The account needed should show how correct interpretation brings together the various competence

⁷Communicative Competence: Theory and Classroom Practice (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1983).

⁸Ibid., pp. 37-46.

components, in accordance with the appropriate knowledge. How, for instance, do Savignon's rules of appropriateness or Dore's pragmatic criteria relate to communicative presuppositions which make vernacular interpretation possible, or to the meaning components of speech acts?

The analysis of interpretation needed has its roots in linguistic pragmatics, especially in the work of J. L. Austin,⁹ H. P. Grice,¹⁰ and J. Searle,¹¹ who raise concerns with how the functional units of speech derive their meaning, both for informing correct interpretation (and thus establishing what should count as competent linguistic practice in a speech community) and in response to usage in such communities. Austin and Searle show how in communication speakers perform work in speech acts, and so a large part of interpretation involves speaker and auditor knowledge of the conventions of a speech community for performing that work, such as promising. Grice argues that speakers use and exploit presupposed maxims of communication, and can be interpreted by making implicatures (his term for specific sets of inferences) in conversation. On these linguistic pragmatic approaches, interpretation depends in part on presumed maxims

⁹How To Do Things With Words (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1955).

¹⁰Studies in the Way of Words (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

¹¹Speech Acts (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1969).

of conversation, the conventional meaning of sentences being uttered, speaker meaning and various rules of usage. I will discuss the relevant distinctions of these kinds of meaning in section 2.2 as a way to navigate the logic of the question of interpretation and meaning.

Both pragmatic approaches and competence theory have strengths and shortcomings, as I've been suggesting. The pragmatic investigations treat the logical aspects of speech acts well, but do not directly address the social aspects of communication, particularly in vernacular situations.¹² As Dore emphasizes,

[a]lthough grammatical knowledge is a guide to the participant's comprehension of the semantic import of sentence type, the systemic meanings given by the grammar do not fully determine the many situated meanings of a speech encounter.¹³

¹²This must be qualified. Clearly, pragmatics just is the study of those features of communicative situations which are context sensitive. I mean here, however, a greater analytical subtlety: how do these context sensitive features make their way into the analysis of the logic of conversation? Certainly it is granted—and I concede this point—that all theories of communication in language can accommodate context sensitivity. But the underdevelopment of this part of the theory (which should properly include, among other things, social facts) has tended to level our understanding of just how they are to be accommodated. This becomes especially pressing if, as is generally presumed, context sensitive features of speech act situations disambiguate both speaker meaning and conventional meaning. To the extent that social knowledge may be taken as among the context sensitive features of a communicative situation, the need to investigate just how it may be accommodated in a theory of meaning and interpretation is that much more urgent.

¹³Dore, "The Development of Conversational Competence," p. 6.

What does seem clear is that competence is to be reconstructed in terms of the capability to recognize both linguistic features of utterances and features of contexts in which utterances are produced, implying that interpreting utterances requires knowing both sets of features. The competence theorists treat the broad features of utterance interpretation well, particularly its cognitive dimensions, but don't relate that competence—especially its context sensitive aspects—back to the logic of conversation. And neither area of research treats vernacular situations (as such) systematically. The need thus remains for a rigorous treatment of meaning and social interpretative knowledge in vernacular speech contexts.

2.2 / SPEAKER MEANING AND CONVENTIONAL MEANING

While there is really no philosophical writing on vernacular speech as such, there is standard spade work which has been done to help account for what it is auditors recognize when they interpret spoken utterances.¹⁴ In this section

¹⁴Grice's work has been very influential, even definitive, in developing analyses based on the sort of spade work I refer to. He has argued that, in interpreting utterances, we must presume speakers to be following maxims of conversation, as well as ourselves making a complex system of logical inferences. In my discussion, however, I will not be exploring his account as much as making plain a basic distinction for which such accounts provide analyses. For a development of his account of meaning, particularly the relation of speaker meaning to other sorts of meaning, see S. R. Schiffer, Meaning (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), especially pp. 7-87. More recently, see A. Avramides,

I will discuss how speaker meaning and conventional meaning compare, so as to indicate how vernacular speech has a natural entry point into problems of meaning and interpretation. It is around this distinction that my later discussions of Crummell and Locke are organized.

We may distinguish within a speech act (1) the standard, literal or conventional meaning of a sentence being uttered, as well as (2) what a speaker means by the utterance on a specific occasion. To these notions of meaning may be added (3) that meaning which is accrued in virtue of the utterance's being used on some occasion. For convenience, I shall call these three—following established practice in the literature—conventional meaning, speaker meaning and utterance meaning. Note that these distinctions among kinds of meaning encompass pragmatic and context-bound notions of what a speaker means by a particular utterance in a particular context, as well as broadly semantic notions of conventional sentence-meaning.

Meaning and Mind: An Examination of a Gricean Account of Language (Cambridge, MA: Bradford Books of the MIT Press, 1989); D. Sperber & D. Wilson, Relevance: Communication and Cognition (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), especially pp. 1-64; A. P. Martinich, "Meaning and Intention: Black versus Grice," Dialectica XLIV (1990), pp. 79-98; A. Kemmerling, "Utterer's Meaning Revisited," in Philosophical Grounds of Rationality: Intentions, Categories, Ends, ed. by R. E. Grandy & R. Warner (Oxford: Clarendon at Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 131-155; and P. Suppes, "The Primacy of Utterer's Meaning," in Philosophical Grounds of Rationality: Intentions, Categories, Ends, ed. by R. E. Grandy & R. Warner (Oxford: Clarendon at Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 109-129.

Speaker meaning, as a context sensitive notion, proves to be interesting from the standpoint of vernacular speech; as it turns out, this is what is precisely at issue in the writing of Crummell and Locke, as I shall later show. To what extent do speakers competent in a vernacular dialect, it may be asked, engage in linguistic practices by exploiting some relation of speaker meaning to conventional meaning? More specifically—and perhaps more interestingly—it may be asked how speaker meaning, when it diverges from conventional meaning, can be assessed (and thus interpreted)? How is this sort of interpretive gap closed successfully (and reliably) by competent auditors? In fact, much of what characterizes vernacular speech is the wide availability to participants of linguistic practices which exploit this divergence. What seems clear in cases where speaker meaning and conventional meaning do not coincide—when literal meaning is false, for example, and speaker meaning is true, as on metaphoric usage¹⁵—is that a speaker means something that is suggested by, but is not the same as, conventional meaning. Vernacular speech cases serve to cast the distance between speaker meaning and conventional meaning in sharper relief, and the analysis based on these cases reveals more clearly the linguistic and epistemological relations speakers stand in with respect to the speech communities of which they are members. It also

¹⁵In metaphor, a speaker deliberately brings about a divergence of the two kinds of meaning. See Searle, Speech Acts.

helps show the extent to which speaker meaning is itself tied to the linguistic practices of a speech community.

Note that, given the distinction between speaker meaning and conventional meaning, social knowledge may be employed to close the attendant interpretive gap in case they diverge. By "social knowledge" I mean knowledge whose proper object is social facts. Such facts include facts about social role and status, and how these bear on a speaker's entitlement to produce utterances in a given dialect, for instance. While social knowledge presumably serves as a step in an inference among kinds of meaning and a variety of disparate facts in the interpretive process, it's not clear just how this goes or whether theoretical fruit might be borne by a philosophical analysis of social knowledge.

2.3 / BACKGROUND AND INTERPRETATION

In this section I consider an insight from sociolinguistics which I believe to be very promising in indicating the direction for the vernacular (and social knowledge) analysis. I will motivate the claim that background knowledge of social facts has a direct link with context, and thus with vernacular interpretation; if properly analyzed, it will set up an account which can clarify the nature of social knowledge in conversational inference.

The insight I want to discuss comes most strongly in the work of the linguist J. Gumperz who has argued explicitly for a prominent role for social knowledge. Let me give the main

outlines of his account, indicating how I think a theory of interpretation ought to treat social knowledge.

Gumperz argues that, in conversation, a speaker's choice of lexical and grammatical forms triggers "structures of expectation" in an auditor, which are integrated into culturally specific notions of what lines of argument or themes are possible in that conversation.¹⁶ To interpret, auditors assess these expectations in search of an interpretation that makes sense. These contextualization cues have a linguistic dimension—they are uninterpretable apart from concrete situations, and so cannot be described in abstract terms (as can words which can be listed in dictionaries and explained in grammars).

To decide an interpretation, continues Gumperz, participants must first make a preliminary interpretation which they then check against social background knowledge:

they listen to speech, form a hypothesis about what routine is being enacted, and then rely on social background knowledge and on co-occurrence expectations to evaluate what is intended and what attitudes are conveyed.¹⁷

What is the nature of these routines? How do we integrate utterances into them? It is tempting to say we pair sentence content with context cues to create culturally specific speech events, but this is too simplistic. Social in-

¹⁶J. J. Gumperz, "Sociocultural Knowledge in Conversational Inference," in Georgetown University Round Table on Languages and Linguistics, edited by M. Saville-Troike (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 1977).

puts can change as interaction progresses, interpretations can be multiply embedded, several different interactions often occur at the same time.

I suggest, in accord with my preacher example, that these context cues are exactly what auditors confront when they hear vernacular switches and try to interpret them. It is based on such cues that participants can determine whether a remark is to be interpreted as formal, honorific, or even insulting, on the basis of dialect switches.

Gumperz follows a similar line of argument in discussing what he calls speech activities. These activities include discussing politics, chatting, talking business—activities which, upon entering them, signal expectations about thematic progression, turn-taking rules, and even constraints on content. They "are the means through which social knowledge is stored in the form of constraints on action and on possible interpretation" even as these constraints vary across cultures. Speech activities—like dialect switches—function as guidelines for interpretation.¹⁸

On both my implicit suggestion that dialect switches are a function of social knowledge, and Gumperz's explicit suggestion that speech activities are likewise, we face a problem: what if these stores of social knowledge aren't identical among participants in communication? How can we be certain we are interpreting as a speaker intends?

¹⁸Ibid.

We need to tighten the account a bit to build in a coordinating mechanism. Once again, Gumperz:

[A] successful interaction begins with each speaker talking in a certain mode, using certain contextualization cues. Then participants, by the verbal style in which they respond and the listenership cues they produce, implicitly signal their agreement or disagreement; thus they "tune into" the other's way of speaking. Once this has been done, and once a conversational rhythm has been established, both participants can reasonably assume that they have successfully negotiated a frame of interpretation; that is, they have agreed on what activity is being enacted and how it is to be conducted. At this point, a principle of strategic consistency takes over. Speakers continue in the same mode, assigning negotiated meanings to contextualization cues, until there is a perceptible break in rhythm, a shift of content and cues, or until a mismatch between content and cues suggests that something has gone wrong.¹⁹

The ability to maintain, control, and evaluate conversation, Gumperz concludes, is a function of the communicative and—by extension—the ethnic background of speech act situations.

This *prima facie* argument for analyzing social knowledge may be further illuminated by considering the following fact: vernacular patterns are what they are largely because they are written, if they are written, only after they have been in wide circulation among speakers. African Americans spoke what has been called "plantation English" long before Harriet Beecher Stowe provided literary attestations to it in Uncle Tom's Cabin;²⁰ New York working class speech patterns were established well enough to form the primary speech vernacular of movie heavies and stand-up comics long before anyone tried

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Uncle Tom's Cabin (Boston, 1852).

to write it down. Part of what makes vernacular speech so interesting is that it belies the assumption that when we speak and interpret, we are interpreting sentences which only happen to be spoken or uttered.²¹ Given their evolution, sentences-used-as-utterances isn't the right analytic unit to use when discussing these patterns. Sentences aren't how they are produced, and it isn't how they developed.

Thus, purely semantic issues are actually quite limited in vernacular interpretation. In storytelling, in narration, and most ritualized insult, pragmatic features are much more useful in analyzing how vernacular utterances are to be properly interpreted. Speaker meaning, to reintroduce the analytic unit discussed in the previous section, serves a central role in vernacular communication. Moreover, these pragmatic features have a genetic and a conceptual relation to context and social knowledge; genetic, in that participants' capacities to interpret vernacular utterances originate in vernacular contexts, which by definition are rich in social constraints on what may be accepted by auditors and what may be said by speakers; conceptual, in that vernacular utterances are by their very nature used in informal spoken communication, so there are no issues—not conceptually—of relating vernacular speech patterns to written language, as there are for standard dialects. The issues which arise in this latter area arise only after the vernacular is being engaged

²¹For instance, Chomsky's Aspects, chapter one.

by literary and research traditions. As such, the analysis of utterances in speech acts, if it doesn't address these concerns, is likely to be at best incomplete, and at worst misleading.

What is required is a keen recognition of what the utterance does socially in a speech situation, namely what is presupposed about the relationship of the speaker and the auditor, and how this utterance is to be interpreted in light of their respective social roles. Call these roles—and whatever recognition participants in communication have of them, as well as the conditions for their being what they are—"background", and you have an additional *prima facie* argument for the kind of analysis I'm suggesting we need to develop, namely that of social knowledge in interpretation.

It follows from this that speakers effectively communicate only to the extent that they have access to such a background. For instance, in vernacular speech, at least some of the special context questions that arise have to do with presupposed background knowledge; though recognizing or failing to recognize conditions to speak and be understood characterizes all speech, it is brought out in sharpest relief in vernacular performance and interpretation.

J. Habermas has argued, in keeping with though pointing beyond traditional speech act theory, that interpreting regulative utterances is only possible against a background of social or ethical norms. (I leave a fuller discussion of these notions and some problems they raise to chapter five.)

Regulative utterances include utterances which have a normative dimension, such as giving an order or making a request. It is this background which determines whether or not corresponding utterances are acceptable to auditors. This is so, on Habermas' account, in virtue of implicit appeals participants in communication make to validity claims—claims which establish the validity of the utterance in question. While for empirical assertions—perceptual reports, for instance—the utterance's propositional content determines the validity claim appealed to, the validity claim appealed to in regulative utterances turns on whether a speaker is entitled to make the command (request, directive, etc.) in question. The normative background of a speech situation determines who in what situation is authorized to make what type of command. So, while both assertions and regulative utterances require knowing propositional contents in order for a participant to know acceptability conditions, regulative utterances require not simply knowing meaning, but knowing norms of usage also.

Making the entirely plausible assumption that social situations have norms established in advance of interpretive situations, then this normative knowledge must enter the interpretation of actual situations. So, interpreting the command to

take out the garbage

as warranted depends on the utterance's content only to the extent that the auditor rightly understands the utterance situation, as per: (1) the right interpretation of a situa-

tion given a background of norms, and (2) the rightness of the norms themselves. Note that, while a doubt raised about an empirical assertion concerns the relation of truth of the content to an objective state of affairs obtaining at the time of utterance, a doubt raised about a regulative utterance concerns the character of the utterance situation.

To successfully interpret, then, auditors must recognize the conditions on which validity claims raised in utterances can (at least) be accepted. And those conditions depend on social roles, whether speaker and auditor enjoy the kind of relationship warranting such validity claims: relationship with each other, for appropriateness, relationship with the objective world, for truth, and relationship with social norms, for normative validity. A speaker motivates an auditor with the force of their utterance to understand what is expressed in a speech act, because the speaker has warrant to produce such an utterance. Communicative competence requires recognizing when background conditions of the acceptability of utterances have been met—as a function of the three sorts of validity claims.

The background of vernacular speech, then, consists of presuppositions made by participants in speech situations, regulating who is entitled to make what utterance, and, given that, what is to count as a correct interpretation. The extent to which these context sensitive questions are distinctive to vernacular interpretation (if they are) depends on the need for an overlap of background knowledge by speakers

and auditors.²² In fact, that's why bidialectal speakers are so interesting, because there's a competence enabling a switch among interpretive criteria. (I'll discuss some of these issues in more detail in chapter five.)

What then is the nature of this background, and how does it present itself in the communicative situations of competent speakers of a vernacular? This is the question I pose in the next two chapters as I read and consider the arguments on communication and African American life in the writings of Crummell and Locke. In chapter five I revisit the explicit analysis I began here, using the insights I reconstruct from the arguments of Crummell and Locke.

²²Be careful not to confuse how I'm posing this issue. I make no principled claim that vernacular utterances constitute a pragmatically or semantically special class. I make only the (non-controversial) claim that such utterances cast general issues about meaning and interpretation in sharper relief. A comparison to W. v. O. Quine is instructive here: his discussion of radical translation is in itself not terribly interesting, at least not philosophically; there are no special semantic issues which can or should be settled for persons engaging in translation. But the value of that analysis consists in the fact that Quine uses the example of translation to illustrate more general semantic features of natural language. The example is chosen for the transparency it affords him in making his argument. Likewise for vernacular speech: it casts in sharpest relief the issues of interpretation, meaning and social fact which philosophy of language attends to. (See Quine, Word and Object (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1960), pp. 26-79.)

CHAPTER 3

MEANING AND ONTOLOGY IN ALEXANDER CRUMMELL

The aim of this chapter and the next is to tell how the vernacular speech of African American speakers of English has been understood historically with respect to the Standard English Dialect. I explore these arguments for two reasons primarily, and one secondarily: first, sociolinguistic descriptions of the vernacular speech of African American speakers of English have a theoretical history which has been little, if at all, explored. These two chapters examine a small piece of that history. Reconstructing these arguments, then, will help illuminate my current research efforts, as well as inform efforts in scholarly work more broadly. Second, a variety of problems around interpretation and competence in communication which are current in philosophy have been explored in nineteenth century semantics and grammatical theory, though within ontological frames since discredited. As Chomsky has observed, given twentieth century linguistic tools,

such research programs might again be instructive.¹ I believe the programs represented by Crummell and Locke may be counted among these. Third, the African American philosophical tradition can be understood only to the extent that its central conceptual issues and attendant arguments have been explored. While a fair amount of work has been done around ethical and social theoretical arguments,² little if any serious attention has been paid to language theoretical writings in the tradition. Given the near consensus within philosophy that logical and linguistic investigations form a theoretical hub

¹N. Chomsky, Aspects of the Theory of Syntax (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1965), p. v; also see his interesting (but brief) discussion of historical anticipations of contemporary grammatical theory, same citation, pp. 3-9.

²See, for example, the excellent anthology of work on the tradition: L. Harris, ed., Philosophy Born of Struggle: Anthology of Afro-American Philosophy from 1917 (Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt, 1983). While the pieces represent a variety of philosophical orientations and concerns, there is a remarkable consistency of attention to problems within moral and political philosophy. A number of more recent entries emphasize a related set of concerns: for example, F. M. Kirkland, "Modernity and Intellectual Life in Black," Philosophical Forum, XXIV, Nos. 1-3 (1992-1993), 136-165; B. Boxill, "Two traditions in African American Political Philosophy," Philosophical Forum, XXIV, Nos. 1-3 (1992-1993), 119-135; H. McGary, "Alienation and the African-American Experience," Philosophical Forum, XXIV, Nos. 1-3 (1992-1993), 282-296. The emphases that these titles suggest—and that these pieces explore—are characteristic of current scholarship: generally quite nuanced regarding questions of culture, ethical identity, moral action and public policy, without a concomitant development of problems in language theory. This, of course, is in no way the fault of any particular scholar. The point here is simply that more remains to be done.

around which more global philosophical concerns develop,³ scholarly treatments of the tradition must await investigations like the one in which I am presently engaging.

3.1 / THE ARGUMENT OF THE CHAPTER

Crummell represents one pole of argument on African American speech within the tradition. He argues that, since intensions are in the mind, and "mind" in some broader idealist sense is what evolves as a race is acculturated toward "civilization"—to invoke the nineteenth century idiom he used—then intensional mental life should serve as the focus on that evolution. Interpretation is therefore a matter of cultivating cognitive competences for interpreting the content which linguistic "vehicles" of mental ideas carry. Given an appropriately complex picture of moral life, these competences can be linked to moral character development, specifically in terms of one's habituation to civilized thought and action. The power which language has to acculturate speakers becomes primary for Crummell in this way, while its power to coordinate social action becomes secondary.

The centrality Crummell gives to intensions as mental entities renders his a psychologistic account. He espouses a view I dub the Semantic Identity Thesis, which is the view

³I mean here nothing more tendentious than to point this out as the general trend within English-language philosophical history of the last century.

that the content of intensions in the mind is identical to the content of linguistic vehicles—hence the aptness of the “vehicle” metaphor. This thesis is crucial to understanding his broader claims about the work language can do in a speech community. It will serve as the focus for my discussion of him as well as discussions of conventional and speaker meaning in later chapters.

In Crummell’s arguments the background of communication constitutes the social dimension (a component tied directly to one’s speech community) of communicative language, in that one’s entitlement to speak is distributed as a function of a speaker’s relation to resources for effective and appropriate communication in a speech community. Those resources, both cognitive and linguistic, are effective to the extent that they support a speech community’s collective goals in a variety of cultural spheres, and they are appropriate to the extent that they accord with the normative dimensions of those collective goals. He explores how utterances are to be interpreted with respect to this sort of shared background knowledge.

3.2 / THE SEMANTIC IDENTITY THESIS IN NINETEENTH CENTURY PHILOSOPHY

Crummell is important not simply from the standpoint of African American philosophy. As a distinctively nineteenth century thinker, studying his work can illuminate the history

of philosophy generally.⁴ In this section I will briefly give one or two main contours of the logical context in which Crummell wrote, particularly with regard to theory of language. I will discuss logical issues current among European nationalists as well as other (predominantly African American) intellectual circles in the course of the main discussion in subsequent sections.

While the prevailing conception in his day of what grammatical theory can and should do demanded ontological commitments no present-day philosopher would or should accept, sense can still be made of Crummell's analysis from a perspective from within that theory. When it is seen how language and ideas are related on this sort of account, nineteenth century grammatical theory can be appropriately reconstructed and become instructive.

An ambitious and widespread research program, grammar preoccupied many writers in eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe. What might spoken language reveal about national character, it was asked, particularly that of the various cultures which Europe was only then encountering (and, in most cases, conquering)? Can the strangeness to European sen-

⁴ Impacting historical scholarship on the philosophy of language can very dramatic, given the paucity of such work. One of the very few historical treatments of language theory by a philosopher is that of Ian Hacking, Why Does Language Matter to Philosophy? (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1975). Nearly two decades have passed since the publication of that work; clearly the need is overdue.

sibilities of 'savages, Negroes, and Indians'⁵ be explained through studying their uses of language? More polemically—though few stated it in these terms—can linguistic data be used to support the larger ideology of race, nation, spirit?

W. Humboldt, an important influence in the history of linguistics, tied grammar to what was then called "national development" and "character."⁶ He emphasized differences among natural languages, as opposed to the universal grammarians, proposing a comparative model instead. To the universal grammarian's attempts to show deep universally shared linguistic and cognitive structures, he argued that each natural language's inner form expresses the "psyche" of the nation where it develops, which it binds together. That form is manifest both in root words and in patterns of word combinations, so languages can accommodate different nuances of meaning, reflecting the different worldviews held by the members of the national speech community. Language forms can thus support ontological descriptions of national character. Humboldt's conception of language and ontology serves as an important conceptual element in Crummell's arguments.

A second important anticipation of Crummell's views is that of the British empiricists. J. Locke understood grammar

⁵This phrase—and others like it—makes its way into print in the writings of a surprising number of canonical figures in philosophy, including D. Hume and I. Kant, among many others.

⁶Humanist Without Portfolio: An Anthology, translated by M. Cowan (Detroit, 1963).

as pairing pristine, discrete "ideas" to pristine, discrete "words" in unproblematic one-to-one mappings.⁷ In fact, the view that words and ideas have direct semantic correspondence is typically held in this tradition.⁸ On this view, the content which a word expresses is an idea in the mind of a speaker; competent participants in communication, in order to interpret utterances, have to be proficient in recognizing "contentful" features of the minds of speakers. To paraphrase J. Bentham, the immediate subject of a communication is the state of a speaker's mind. As it turns out, Bentham was rather sympathetic to the universal grammar movement from which Humboldt distanced himself. In fact, Bentham saw that the universal grammar program needed to investigate the mind to complete its account of language, meaning and grammar, for which he looked to thoughts—what we now refer to as propositions—rather than empiricist ideas. Propositions here name abstract entities, which are not identical to thoughts, but instead form the contents of thoughts. In this way words and ideas are ontologically distinct, even if they are semantically identical.⁹

⁷J. Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, book III, edited by P. H. Nidditch (New York: Clarendon Press of Oxford University Press, 1975).

⁸Bentham, in C. K. Ogden, Bentham's Theory of Fictions (London, 1932).

⁹Ibid.

Crummell develops his position from this semantic identity view, on which the semantic content of mental ideas (intensions) is identical to the content of linguistic units such as utterances. He also develops from the universal grammar movement the attempt to articulate principles and elements common to all languages as an antecedent to the study of some particular language. According to an eighteenth century proponent, the project will produce "that grammar which without regarding idioms of particular languages only respects those principles essential to them all."¹⁰

3.3 / GRAMMAR AND MEANING IN THE SPEECH COMMUNITY:

THE ARGUMENT FROM "CIVILIZATION"

To understand how Crummell develops an account defending certain language forms as more appropriate for the African American speech community, we must consider his concurrent development of a Black nationalist "ontolinguistics"—the view that forms of language use reflect the moral status of a nation or race, where status is measured against standards established according to a corollary theory of racial progress. This sort of view is linguistic because it makes claims about language use. It is ontological because it makes claims about kinds (nations, races), that they are natural and the bearers of a particular moral status. Crummell's on-

¹⁰Harris, Hermes, or a Philosophical Inquiry Concerning Language and Universal Grammar (1751).

tolinguistics in turn depends on the widely held account of the civilization of racial types, as well as the view that the collective goals of African Americans are best conceived as a moral project, conceived in terms of linguistic vehicles for mental (and thus moral) pursuits. In this section I'll locate each of these strands in sketch in relation to the others, particularly as they bear on Crummell's argument from "civilization" defending English use in the African American community.

In an 1860 speech on "The English language in Liberia,"¹¹ Crummell argued to his Liberian audience that the "exile of our fathers" from their African home to America conferred at least one compensation: mastery of the English language. With that mastery comes a variety of intellectual and moral challenges, amounting to the "civilization of the race" as he might have put it. Crummell offers a series of arguments for this position, some more elegant than others, making the point that the Anglo-Saxon tongue confers advantages for "a noble national growth" and "future superiority" for African American people; language use thus has everything to do with the future of the African American nation.¹² I'll discuss the specific arguments shortly.

¹¹From his The Future of Africa (New York: Scribner, 1862).

¹²Ibid., p. 8ff.

Three decades later in a eulogy delivered on the Rev. Henry Highland Garnet, Crummell praises his friend's brilliance of thought and word, evidenced especially in sharp wit and rhetoric.

From such sallies of wit [Garnet] would turn, by the easiest transitions, to the current of his discourse; now commanding his audience by argument, now captivating them by a lofty and glowing sentiment; at one time subduing them by the tenderest passages, and then arousing them to fiery ardor by the fervency of his own excited feelings.¹³

On both speaking occasions, Crummell presumes that language use engages a variety of moral and cognitive faculties in the community of speakers. From the cognitive powers of a Garnet to the "civilizing" potential for English-speaking Liberians, his great insight is that language use is a primary site of struggle for Africans in exile. Given his prominence in the history of ideas as a founding figure of both Pan-Africanism and Black nationalism, this focus shouldn't be very surprising: every great African American thinker thereafter—from W. E. B. Du Bois to Zora Neale Hurston—has conceded this point, that the mastery of one or another variety of language use helps situate a people strategically in struggle.

Crummell, however, focuses the issue on linguistic competence: if the collective challenge for a people in struggle is to achieve certain intellectual and moral standards, then the linguistic competence to communicate effectively—to produce comprehensible utterances, and to recognize when others

¹³A. Crummell, Africa and America (Miami, FL: Mnemosyne, 1969), p. 287.

are doing so—is paramount. Whether defending abstract moral concepts in practical discourse, teaching children social norms, arbitrating disputes under a system of law, or meaningfully describing events in the objective world, the linguistic and cognitive skills which Crummell saw as the hub of modern life prepare a people for the demands of the life of freedom African Americans then faced.

Nonetheless, I take his concern to focus even more specifically on the question of this dissertation: what do participants in communication need to know—or at least be able to recognize—in order to render correct interpretations of spoken utterances? How do participants interpret what an utterance means? I see his main arguments defending English use, particularly the argument from civilization, as intending to answer this question about knowledge and interpretation. I take this view of his work on the basis of his emphasis on the cognitive and linguistic effects of adopting English. Almost without exception, Crummell identifies the power of English in terms of its clarity and power in conveying ideas which he held in high regard. This characteristic emphasis raises the issue, in virtue of what does English succeed in this way? What must be true of speakers, auditors and their respective cognitive and linguistic apparatuses such that that sort of success can be envisioned? Communicative uptake thus becomes central, particularly as it relates to meaning and content.

African peoples in the diaspora have developed language use through a variety of cultural practices. But those practices didn't find their way into English without a heavy price, as Crummell observes:

[T]his English, which we are speaking, and teaching the heathen to speak, is not our native tongue. This Anglo-Saxon language, which is the only language ninety-nine hundredths of us emigrants have ever known, is not the speech of our ancestors. ... [We] all speak in a foreign tongue, in accents alien from the utterance of [our] fathers. Our very speech is indicative of sorrowful history; the language we use tells of subjection and of conquest. No people lose entirely their native tongue without the bitter trial of hopeless struggles, bloody strife, heart-breaking despair, agony, and death! Even so we.¹⁴

His appreciation of the price of learning English is as keen as his sense of gain.

But this fact of humiliation seems to have been one of those ordinances of Providence, designed as a means for the introduction of new ideas into the language of a people; or to serve, as the transitional step from low degradation to a higher and nobler civilization.¹⁵

Political conquest is here an ambivalent historical fact, as a means to introduce "new ideas" into a people's language (a point Crummell argues more successfully in an essay he delivered in 1885 on "The Need of New Ideas and New Aims for a New Era," subsequently published in 1891).¹⁶ Providing the "transitional step from low degradation to a higher and nobler civilization" to its speech communities, English has "unusual force and power." It is thus a "fit channel," he

¹⁴"English Language," pp. 17, 18.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 18.

¹⁶In his Africa and America.

notes, for the thoughts of common sense, honest minds, and upstanding character. English is thus unlike various African languages, which he regards as having "definite marks of inferiority" such as being harsh, abrupt, and possessing few grammatical forms and a meager lexicon; moreover, he claims that African languages lack concepts such as justice and right, which constitute robust moral and political orders.

In the terms of grammar theory, Crummell thus argues that features of universal grammar are exemplified in a purer, richer form in English, especially in its standard forms as opposed to its "broken" dialects. The noble national character which the Anglophilic Crummell lauded served, in his eyes, as substantive evidence for recommending English use in the African American speech community. Translated into a more contemporary idiom, speakers of English can thus manage that grammar which best facilitates auditor access to the content of the speaker's ideas, ensuring that those ideas may be reliably and truthfully uttered in linguistic communication.

K. A. Appiah has seen this issue, particularly as it is raised in nineteenth century nationalism, as one of a struggle between nativism and positivism. For Appiah, nativism about language and race turns on the claim that (with J. G. Herder, the German nationalist)¹⁷ languages and tradi-

¹⁷J. G. Herder, New German Literature: Fragments, (1767).

tions are "expressive of the collective essence of a pristine traditional community" defined, of course, in racial and national terms. Positivism, on the other hand, turns on a view of languages as "mere tools" which are detachable, so to speak, from the ideas and "essences" they convey.¹⁸ There is much to be said about this sort of conception of the controversy. It affords explanations, for instance, of the embracing of the Anglo-Saxon "dialect" by such writers as Thomas Jefferson. The pull of the Sprachgeist which the English language expresses, it would follow, recommends its diligent study and mastery.

There remains, however, a nuance which Appiah's approach risks overlooking. A figure like Crummell can only in some qualified sense be said to be nativist about language. His argument from "civilization," as I've been giving it here, relies on a move from Negro language to Anglo-Saxon language, not simply because the Anglo-Saxon tongue expresses that race's essence, but—perhaps more importantly—it facilitates the elevation of the Negro race itself, qua Negro. Crummell isn't arguing for English to be spoken by African Americans so that they may cease to be Negro, but so that they may be more fully Negro. Refer, for example, to Crummell's essay on the "destined superiority" of the Negro race. There he argues that Africans need to recognize the hand of providence in the

¹⁸K. A. Appiah, In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 47-56.

particular dealings they've faced historically, toward the end that they would see how, in all, they as a race would flourish.

The confusion with this aspect of Crummell's argument arises in part because he doesn't consistently identify the communities of African Americans with respect to the continent of Africa itself. Instead, in articulating the condition of Africans, he makes use of racial categories—"Negro"—advocating its adoption of English institutions. Sometimes this sounds as if he means to dispense with nativism and embrace the positivist conception of language (English as a tool for the Negro race) and sometimes it sounds as if he means to embrace nativism (the Negro race, in developing cultural resources, is developing language which can express its essence). Neither reading, though, can consistently be maintained in Crummell, and so the nuance we risk missing on Appiah's distinction slips by.

Examining the issue instead in terms of pragmatic resources gives more explanatory power. Crummell certainly takes the claim that language expresses racial essence seriously. However, he likewise accepts as part of the nature of language that it is used. These claims can be reconciled using my notion of ontolinguistics: language on this premise expresses an ontological property—call it "race"—and this expression is then used to support the development of a community's ethical identity. Crummell, in other words, saw the adoption of English as resolving both an ethical and an onto-

logical problem: it would enable access to cognitive resources which in turn elevates the race which in turn lifts the status of that which is being expressed in language. And the entire process only becomes workable to the extent that language is seen pragmatically, that is, in use.

On Crummell's account, then, one needs grammatical competence to interpret utterances; but note carefully that many nineteenth century philosophers used a thicker concept of grammar, which includes an utterance's conventional meaning—the content of the idea which stands in an identity relation to the word used in communicating that idea. Grammar, in other words, names that feature of language which is described by giving relations among linguistic elements. Since the study of meaning was taken by the empiricists to consist in identity relations among linguistic and cognitive elements, it was considered a part of grammatical theory. If grammar on this account is the structural relation between word and idea, then grammatical competence is the ability to correctly pair ideas with words, securing that utterances mean in accord with the ideas held by sincere communicators, permitting auditors to render correct interpretations. The larger theoretical picture on which this sort of argument rests consists of the variety of claims I referred to earlier as ontolinguistics.

Crummell, like many ontolinguists of his day, adopts the empiricist view of communication in which (linguistic) words and (mental) ideas are semantically identical with one an-

other. Crummell further endorses the view that collective racial goals have a moral dimension, conceived in terms of linguistic vehicles for mental (and moral) development. He argues that the grammar of standard English dialects, as opposed to other "broken" dialects, is particularly well-suited for serving as these linguistic vehicles. Standard grammars exemplify the richest grammatical resources for ordering ideas, and thereby facilitating interpretation.

Crummell departs from a straight empiricist framework, however, by focusing on the speech community: whereas the empiricist is primarily concerned with the mental state and utterance of the individual speaker, Crummell is concerned with the larger African American struggle as a problem of the "nation-race." More specifically, he understands mental content in relation to the linguistic system employed within a speech community, with phonological, lexical, syntactic (grammatical) and semantic elements. Accordingly, I take Crummell to be arguing for two distinct kinds of competence—formal competence and competence of "genius."¹⁹ While formal competence refers to a speaker's control of standard grammatical forms, "genius" refers to the character of the nation-race which language use reflects. The two enjoy not only coincidence, but a causal connection, since controlling appropriate grammars gives access to the genius of a language.

¹⁹I take this term—and the attendant distinction—from his "English Language" essay.

[T]he English language is the enshrinement of those great charters of liberty which are essential elements of free governments, and the main guarantees of personal liberty.²⁰

In truth, how could France or Spain train the Negro race to high ideas of liberty and of government, when all their modern history has been an almost hopeless effort, to learn the alphabet of freedom,—to tread the first steps of legal self-restraint?... [I]n capacity for free government, and civil order, the British West India Isles, Sierra Leone, the free colored men of America, and our own Republic are, without doubt, far in advance of all the rest of the children of Africa under the sun. Indeed it is only under the influence of Anglo-Saxon principles that the children of Africa, despite their wrongs and injuries, have been able to open their eyes to the full, clear, quiet, heavens, of freedom, far distant, though at times they were!²¹

On this account, acquiring mastery of the language of the English confers a sense of the "dignity of civilization."

Crummell takes three moral arguments to follow:

1. English is a lingual inheritance from God for the future, and is thus to be preserved and sustained in purity, simplicity, correctness—to be taught in schools, and made available through popular reading materials;
2. heathen nations neighboring Anglophone African states should be trained "to the spirit, moral sentiments, and practical genius" of the English they learn.

This second argument is particularly crucial, since not all who speak English are by that fact Anglicized.

Is our influence upon [Africans] to touch only the brain, and not life, manners, the family, society? Or rather should we not as a Nation, take upon us the duty of so training these people, that as they receive the language, so they may likewise the civilization, the order, the industry, and the mild, but transforming influences of a regulated Christian state?

This nation is to restore society all along our coast; and by restoring society to regulate social life, to quicken in

²⁰Ibid., p. 25.

²¹Ibid., p. 31.

its growth the 'tender plant of confidence,' in both a direct and indirect manner to elevate the domestic state, to give rise to industrial activity, and to establish good neighborhood.²²

And the third moral argument:

3. To make indigenous the spirit and genius of the English language, the spirit of English "strong institutions" and their legacy.

His endorsement and explication follow:

The spirit of the English language is the spirit of Independence, both personal and national; the spirit of free speech and a free press, and personal liberty; the spirit of reform and development; the spirit of enterprise; the spirit of law, of moral character, and spiritual beneficence. . . . For a language acts in divers ways, upon the spirit of a people; even as the spirit of a people acts with a creative and spiritualizing force upon a language.²³

These three arguments amount to the claim that language use is to forge appropriate solidarities in the speech community, as well as to charitably extend the "civilizing" benefits to African neighbors—all with the larger intent to support a robust moral and political institutional order.

So, by advancing this set of arguments, Crummell fleshes out the Semantic Identity Thesis in terms of the condition of the speech community. He sees the identity of meanings in the mind with meanings in language as securing the facility in conveying ideas, for the moral and civil ends of the race.

These links between culture and race are only possible in Crummell's thought to the extent that he held a distinctively modern conception of what it is to be a people, which

²²Ibid., p. 48.

²³Ibid., pp. 51, 52.

has at its core the scientific conception of race. Appiah argues that there are in fact three crucial senses of race which were current in nineteenth century thought.²⁴ The first, which he calls racialism, holds that there are heritable characteristics constituting a racial essence for a people; that essence supports and generates taxonomically relevant features. Racialism is presupposed by the other two crucial senses which Appiah discusses: extrinsic and intrinsic racism. Extrinsic racism holds that racial essence entails morally relevant qualities which thus warrant the differential treatment of members of given races, whereas intrinsic racism holds that racial essence—because of some intrinsic or natural feature—is the bearer of moral predicates, entailing differential moral status and thus warranting differential treatment. This latter sort of racist holds that predicates attach independently of qualities, so while an extrinsic racist could be presented disconfirming evidence for negative moral treatment (the presence of superior moral qualities) for instance, an intrinsic racist could not; races have the status they have simply because they are those races.

While suggesting that there might be an irresolvable ambiguity about whether Crummell was extrinsically or intrinsically racist (if for no other reason than that Crummell didn't address these issues in these terms), Appiah points out that Crummell saw race as constituting the moral core of

²⁴k. A. Appiah, In My Father's House, pp. 13-27.

a people, which could serve as a solidarity generating structure. The textual support in Crummell for Appiah's claim is quite strong; clearly Crummell saw that "race feelings" and other sympathetic tendencies should be enlisted to model social mechanisms which bring African American aims in line with each other. This in fact is what racial essentialism gives him theoretically. The ontolinguistic premise, then, can be brought into the argument via (as Appiah points out) racialized psychology: the view that there are beliefs (ideas generally) distinctive to racial groups, and that these can be compared and evaluated in terms of civilizing potential. So, Crummell can run his argument advocating the adoption of English for African speakers using the notion of race and its associated psychological and linguistic positions, against a backdrop of civilization theory. He thus arrives at this argument, in other words, via his ontolinguistic account of the powers of mind a grammatically competent speaker possesses, leaning heavily on a nineteenth century theory of grammar.

3.4 / SEMANTIC AND PRAGMATIC PROBLEMS

As any contemporary philosophical reader would suspect, there are many deep problems with Crummell's arguments. However, there is much—a great deal in fact—which is instructive and path clearing in them. I discuss the linguistic difficulties in this section, while in the next I show how the account can be instructive.

The first difficulty for Crummell arises out of the tensions built into his project. He's explicitly concerned with the speech community of African Americans—understood as a racial group, but a community of speakers nonetheless. As such, he is (rightly) committed to analyzing the communicative dimensions of language. Yet Crummell runs into difficulty by recommending standard English, since standard dialects of English cannot exemplify the rich communicative resources which vernacular speech does. By definition, vernacular speech is that language form adopted for its communicative facility. In fact, it's precisely this communicative language of the African American speech community which Crummell appreciates in his later speech regarding the broader pragmatic competences Garnet possessed; Crummell lifts him up as a model of communicative competence.

According to Crummell (read as a grammar theorist), if communicative competence is a competence by auditors to recognize features of the minds of speakers, then grammatical competence, as the surest indicator of rule governed speech, holds sway as the primary consideration for successful racial and national progress. But if communicative competence is a speaker competence to recognize—and perform in accord with—features of an audience's mind (Garnet's "brilliance," for example), then pragmatic effectiveness and rhetorical skills, as the surest indicators of successful speaker predictions of audience response, hold sway for racial progress. Clearly

neither claim is independently sufficient, nor do they together amount to a satisfactory position.

This position is inherently unstable because there seems to be no way to address this instability on ontolinguistic grounds. It's not clear, however, that Crummell recognized this. Perhaps the terms on which he pursued his research program prevented him from recognizing this problem.

Moreover, it is the communicative powers of vernacular speech which can (if any language form can) forge community, which is central to building a "people" which can sustain the linguistic practices needed for collective moral goals. Yet the grammatical powers, which English standard forms exemplify, fortify theoretical and cognitive resources, since they (on Crummell's argument) best facilitate how utterances convey the meanings of ideas. It's not clear that standard English can do what Crummell wants language to do in the speech community.

Some of the linguistic difficulties arise from limitations in nineteenth century philosophy of language. For one thing, few theorists of Crummell's day recognized the difference between how words mean—and thus how they should be interpreted—and how words are used in such linguistic acts as referring. On the empiricist view of grammar, where grammatically competent auditors interpret utterances by reading semantic content, the utterance

3.4.1 I gave her an apple with worms in it

is (partially) interpreted by determining the content of "apple," "gave" and "worms." But while "apple" may clearly mean something like an abstract idea in the speaker's mind, it clearly refers—given the utterance—to a concrete object which the speaker gave away. This becomes more obvious if you compare (3.4.1) to the utterance

3.4.2 yesterday I went to the Big Apple Circus.

Putting aside the issue of proper names, "apple" in (3.4.2) can mean the same thing that it did in (3.4.1), namely the idea "apple," but the two uses diverge in how they refer. If interpreting utterances requires determining the content of words, then something more complex must be going on.

There is a corollary to this point for specifically moral communication. If part of the point of competence for Crummell is to make intelligible the moral exhortations which form the basis of modern ethical communities, then interpretation has to both determine the meanings of words—their general, abstract content—as well as their reference—how they are used and what they pick out in a particular situation. Teaching a child to repay a person who gives them an apple with something of equal value requires that they understand the difference between the idea and the referent; no assessment of value is possible otherwise.

A third difficulty is that empiricist "ideas" were developed (by J. Locke and his contemporaries) primarily to account for the perception of objective phenomena. However, they are often recruited—by J. Locke and D. Hume, no less

than Crummell—to do work in communicative interaction which, especially in light of the normative content of much communication, gives perceptual ideas a job they are scarcely equipped to do. More specifically, it's not at all obvious that the semantic analysis of the objective language of perceptual ideas, as in reporting empirical observations, is the correct analysis for communicative language, which purports to generate and sustain communal solidarities, transmit values, and morally exhort, among other things. Words in an objective description of the world need not relate to their meanings the same way that words in a normative exhortation to a member of one's speech community relate to theirs. If a mother tells a child

the garbage is full

we can interpret her to mean

you should take it out,

an interpretation diverging from that of a mere objective report that the garbage is full.

There is a distinctively pragmatic difficulty, that regulative performative utterances are not distinguished from mere constative utterances.²⁵ That is, there's no systematic

²⁵Note that the status of constatives is controversial within speech act theory; see, for example, J. L. Austin, "Other Minds," Philosophical Papers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), as well as J. Searle, Speech Acts (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 68, on the distinction between saying and promising. However, I mean to beg no questions here. The distinction I here invoke can simply be read as that between utterances recruited to do regulative work and those which do not.

distinction between utterances which do work—"promise" in the utterance

I promise to pay you back,

or

I do

following

do you take this man...?

—and those which do not—"rained" in

it rained last weekend.

As such, Crummell cannot appreciate the extent to which knowledge and use in vernacular communication is both cognitively sophisticated and linguistically deft.

A crucial consequence of this difficulty is that Crummell cannot, without the tools of speech act theory, give an account of interpretation which recognizes how meaning is interpretable in terms of conditions independent of grammar. Meaning, whether (in contemporary terms) conventional, speaker or utterance meaning, is interpretable only by addressing the cognitive state of the speaker. The meanings of words remain passive, derivative and parasitic on that which is private, and thus cannot be brought under independent interpretive scrutiny. So, Crummell can tie meaning to vernacular expression, but has no operative distinction by which he can tie it to the linguistic conditions on which those expressions are produced or interpreted.

As I'll show in chapter four, this last sort of problem motivates the analysis A. Locke gives. Before I move to that

discussion, though, I will say how the analysis I've just explored in Crummell can serve the purposes of a philosophically sound account of meaning.

3.5 / SPEECH COMMUNITY AND INTERPRETIVE RESOURCES

Let me now say just exactly how Crummell's analysis contributes to the account of meaning and interpretation I am building. I begin by stating the Crummellian result from the foregoing sections as a thesis about knowledge and meaning: the object of social knowledge must be directly related to one's speech community. That is, social facts consist of, among other things, a speaker's relation to social norms and rules as established within and articulated by a community of language users, as well as the social status of speakers as determined by social ideals expressed within a speech community. Social rules and ideals, on this thesis, contribute to the correct interpretation of vernacular utterances in serving as the object of social knowledge.

For Crummell, the issue of social knowledge is always contended with in terms of an individual's relation to community-level problems. For instance, the command of standard English for an African American speaker is recommended in large part because it establishes for that speaker an entry into "civilized" social interaction. That entry, while presumably specifiable for individual speakers, is only possible for individuals qua members of a community of speakers. One's entry into Crummellian civilization is always contingent on

the access one's racial group has to that form of civilization. If civilized tendencies can be shown in an individual, it is understood by Crummell to indicate larger civilized tendencies (or at least the possibility of same) in the speech community, understood racially.

To the extent, then, that social knowledge is operative in communication, it is always a function of collective resources which make a given form of communication possible.

The social facts which form the object of social knowledge—at least as I have taken Crummell to be arguing for—include how a speaker stands in relation to a variety of social norms. This follows, in fact, from the connection of individual competence with community language-using features and patterns. An individual has access to knowledge enabling them to use language in accord with a community's collective projects in virtue of their ability to recognize which norms of use to follow, what following them entails, and how auditors will understand them in light of these norms of use. In addition to norms of use are norms governing social status and role within a speech community. Essentially, these consist of the prestige or stigma attaching to various roles, or (to loosely paraphrase the ever status-conscious Crummell) their "dignity" or "shame"; Crummell argues that status can attach to role in virtue of linguistic ability, and that language use (conversely) can be prescribed in accord with one's social status.

In each case, norms in this sense are established by and articulated within one's speech community. This is clearly true of cases of social status, for what else would stigma and prestige be if not collective expressions of social preferences fleshed out in normative terms? It is less clearly true of linguistic usage cases; indeed, I need to argue that this sort of case follows from Crummell's account, given that in Crummell there is less textual support for my claim here about linguistic usage. In defense of this connection, though, Crummell suggests the reading I'm giving in his discussion of English usage in commerce on the West African coast. He argues that English provides a fit form of communication for trading, given its clarity and facility for expression; he implies that communicative uptake is possible in such contexts because of common norms of usage accepted within the trading speech community.²⁶ The trading example is important for my concerns here since it has a distinctly multilingual background, and so communicative participants do not enjoy access to a common determinate linguistic tradition which can unproblematically provide them with independently established norms of usage. Rather, as is true of many such minimal—as distinct from "radical"²⁷—interpretive contexts,

²⁶"English Language."

²⁷See, for instance, D. Davidson, "Radical Interpretation," in Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation (Oxford: Clarendon Press at Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 125-140; also D. Lewis, "Radical Interpretation," in Philosophi-

norms are followed to the extent that they rationalize a practice and thus make interpretation possible. Language use is norm governed here precisely because of needs arising in the practices of a speech community; while it may be true that these norms of use might be substantially co-extensive with textbook rules of English, they are not adopted by speakers for that reason. Thus, they remain subordinate to the contingencies of rule following in the speech community.

The force of this argument in Crummell, if my reading of him on this point is fair, is that interpretation depends in large part on knowing community usages, as well as how speakers understand those usages. The linguist J. L. Dillard makes a similar point in observing how status assignment according to language use bears on available norms for usage. One manifestation he cites occurs in an exchange between a Jamaican bus driver and two distinct (status differentiated) passengers: to the affluent tourist the driver says

3.5.1 please step up sir

while to a group of poor Jamaicans the driver says

3.5.2 me tell unu say step up.²⁸

Here rules of usage vary according to what a speech community will recognize and recommend: in (3.5.2) the rules of usage

cal Papers, vol. II (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 108-121.

²⁸J. L. Dillard, Black English (New York: Vintage Books of Random House, 1972), p. 24.

are those established and adhered to within a speech community of Jamaican speakers (in this case with associated status markers as well) and in (3.5.1) the rules are those established and adhered to within a speech community of tourists and service providers, speaking English. Of course, the rules of usage observed in (3.5.1) are substantially co-extensive with those of textbook Standard English. They are followed in both instances precisely because the community in question can enlist them to support and sustain requisite linguistic practices. Hence Crummell's account retains its force, that the speech community in which vernacular use is established plays a determinative role in norms of use and who may access them.

In the next chapter I will take up the issue of the relation between conventional meaning and speaker meaning, showing how they emerge in Locke's writing on symbol meaning. In chapter five I will conclude the analysis of meaning and social knowledge, incorporating the most promising aspects of the Crummellian account.

CHAPTER 4

MEANING AND COMMUNICATION IN ALAIN LOCKE

The aim of this chapter (as in the previous chapter) is to continue telling some of the history of understanding the vernacular speech of African American speakers of English with respect to the Standard English Dialect. The work of Alain Locke is this chapter's specific focus.

In this chapter I advance my larger argument from Crum-mell's empiricist accounts of knowledge in communication toward contemporary speech act theoretic accounts, such as Habermas'. These latter accounts will be the focus of chapter five. To make this move I will show how an insight about meaning enters the debate on African American speech interpretation. Locke, I argue, is the figure responsible for this entry.

4.1 / THE ARGUMENT OF THE CHAPTER

The distinction between "symbols" and what "values" (Locke's terms) they stand for is expressed by Locke in both semantic and pragmatic terms: linguistic symbols stand for—

and are used in communication to designate—a given value independently of their conventional semantic content. Locke, however, is doubtful that rational communicators in a speech community are able to access values without somehow mediating that knowledge by a "local" or insider knowledge, since he is anti-foundationalist about the ontological status of such values. However, he is confident about the ability of rational communicators to access formal elements of symbol systems expressing values because he is realist about (what he liked to call) culture constants and the cognitive structures which give rise to them.

The Semantic Distance Thesis—the claim that the conventional semantic content and speaker mental states associated with linguistic symbols diverge—captures both Locke's realism and anti-foundationalism. It follows that speaker meaning exploits this distance, and interpretations can only be given to the extent that rational communicators have the appropriate knowledge to recognize this distance. Locke introduces a social and ethical dimension to this discussion: social and ethical identity—one's membership in a speech community—is formed against one's competence to participate in communicative situations, which is in turn a function of one's access to interpretive knowledge. Locke's realism about culture constants bars no one (in principle) from becoming communicatively competent, but his anti-foundationalism about value adds a great deal of theoretical weight to the notion of interpretive knowledge, for access to it becomes that which en-

ables membership. (In this way access becomes contingent on the context of one's identity formation: if that formation is somehow problematic, for social and/or political reasons, for instance, that knowledge becomes more protected, and entitlements to it are restricted along the relevant social and political lines.)

Locke argues that, since content is publicly available—graspable by any mind, but not unique to any—and racial types are products of the historical evolution of culture types, then the development of social vehicles for cultural constants serves as the focus for the broader community; those vehicles, moreover, are germane to identity formation within a distinctly modern cultural and social matrix. So, cultural constants—which for Locke include valuation processes of all sorts, appropriately naturalized—develop as competences develop. On Locke's view, since content is an abstract entity (as are propositions in current terminology), we can thus move away from Crummell's psychologism. Interpretation is, on this non-psychologistic approach, a matter of possessing the ability to recognize and exploit the distance between publicly available content and the linguistic symbols which express them. Given the tie to identity development, interpretation remains (as for Crummell) tied to the speech community, but not for ontolinguistic reasons; instead, the tie is established in virtue of common speech community norms which regulate linguistic usage.

I discuss a difficulty with Locke's account which objects that Crummell's psychologism about communication might not be adequately reformed simply by distinguishing conventional content from the content of mental states and showing that they diverge.¹ Psychological states play a causal role even on the Lockean account of communication and interpretation; for Locke, semantic distance may underdetermine interpretations, leaving communicators with insufficient knowledge to correctly interpret utterances.

4.2 / REALISM AND ANTI-FOUNDATIONALISM IN LOCKE

Locke, a Harvard educated philosopher and cultural theorist, attempted in his writings to establish a theoretical basis for public policy, cultural analysis, and art and literary criticism. It is through these far-reaching projects that he has greatly influenced both African American intellectual history and larger American cultural thought.² The philosophical attention which has been paid to his work—particularly by E. D. Mason and L. Harris—brings to light

¹For a similar argument, see H. Putnam, "The Meaning of 'Meaning,'" Mind, Language and Reality: Philosophical Papers, vol. II (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1975), pp. 215-271.

²This is attested to by, among other things, the enduring relevance of some of Locke's writings. Cultural debates about identity and art, the role of cultural heritage in the creative vision of artists, and even the nature of education and critical thinking in a multi-cultural and multi-racial society, all bear testimony to the timeliness of the themes Locke's attentive mind sought to illuminate.

Locke's various anti-foundationalist positions, particularly as they pertain to truth, moral norms and the ontology of race and culture.³ Much good scholarship has been produced by these writers, and philosophical readers presently enjoy greater illumination on Locke from their work now than ever.⁴

Locke's contributions to the African American tradition remain incompletely understood, though, because while much attention has been paid to Locke's anti-foundationalism, too little has been paid to his realism. In fact, there is a significant issue on which Locke is a realist, and that understanding his realist position will help to better account for his larger contribution to the tradition. In this section I will give the larger account Locke advocated, in order to set up the account of meaning and knowledge in communication and interpretation.

Let me define some terms. By "anti-foundationalism" I mean any view that doubts there are principled grounds about what we can and cannot know; and by "realism" I mean any view that defends a given position as real, where "real" implies

³The citations I'm most concerned with here are the following: E. D. Mason, "Alain Locke on Race and Race Relations," Phylon XL (1979), pp. 342-350; L. Harris, "Identity: Alain Locke's Atavism," Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society XXIV (1988), pp. 65-73.

⁴This is difficult to overstate. Locke was quite prolific in his lifetime, and his commentators have not been hard to find. However, the philosophical reception of his work has been much harder to come by, as it turns out. Harris and Mason have been instrumental in building a cogent critical literature.

that the given position can be used, for instance, in causal explanations. The particular issue I want to focus on here on which Locke is a realist concerns the basis for access by communicators to rational norms of linguistic usage and practice, particularly in interpretation. I want to show that he is anti-foundationalist about how what speakers mean relates to what they say, but that he is realist about what must be true about the minds of participants in communication such that communication is even possible—let alone rich and flourishing. This two-way position is embodied in a view Locke accepts which I call the Semantic Distance Thesis (which I'll give in detail shortly). Locke, I maintain, isn't anti-foundationalist about the possibility for negotiating the distance that thesis posits in communication; rather, he is realist about the cognitive basis for such negotiation. His realism, moreover, rests on a broad naturalist view of social interaction. By "naturalist" I mean any view which takes some class of phenomena in question to be accessible to empirical study, such as that pursued in science. What he's in fact anti-foundationalist about is the Semantic Identity Thesis as expressed in nineteenth century philosophy of language. Much of this part of the argument is discussed in section 4.3 below.

The philosophical basis for Locke's more widely read studies of art, policy and education is generally known by

the name he most often used for it, critical relativism.⁵ This theory informs in important ways the logic of his account of language use in a speech community. In a 1944 essay he argued that three principles define that relativism:⁶ (1) that of cultural equivalence: the principle that there exist functional equivalents (what he also called culture cognates) providing objective common denominators for intercultural understanding and cooperation; (2) cultural reciprocity: the principle that recognizes the reciprocal character of contacts among cultures; and (3) limited cultural convertibility: the principle that, given variation across cultures in how values are instituted, the limiting factor in cultural exchange is a culture's ability to negotiate the distance between the value and the institution. This kind of project can succeed only if an appropriately relativist concept of culture is adopted, leading to an

appreciation of the functional significance of other values in their respective cultures to the eventual discovery and recognition of certain functional common denominators. These culture constants or "culture cognates," as the case might be, would then furnish a base not only for mutual

⁵He actually oscillated among several terms, sometimes in the same essay. Among his preferred: "critical relativism" (which I mention in the text), "cultural relativism" and "value relativism" (though this is ambiguous, since at times he writes as if this latter term named a position on which a relativist theory of culture and critique might rest).

⁶A. Locke, "Cultural Relativism and Ideological Peace," in The Philosophy of Alain Locke: Harlem Renaissance and Beyond, ed. by L. Harris (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), pp. 67-78.

cultural tolerance and appreciation but eventually for effective cultural integration.⁷

E.D. Mason treats a related point raised in an early essay by Locke.⁸ There, Locke argues that to understand cultural values, one has to give (1) an analysis in terms of culture elements and (2) an organic interpretation in terms of its "intrinsic values as a vital mode of living" together with a historical account of its development. Intrinsic values here mean those vital, functional value norms which sustain a culture's identity and existence; "[t]his involves, basically, the manner in which a culture structures reality or the things of nature in order to make sense of the world. It involves, in short, understanding man socially and culturally; Locke calls it the 'principle of organic interpretation.'⁹ Thus we recognize a plurality of values, and then take a functional and historical interpretation of values to "gain some understanding" (Mason's words) of validity or appropriateness in context of a "mode of living" (Locke's words).

The picture that emerges is one where values are thoroughly relativized to cultural constants, those constants being fleshed out in terms of cognitive processes. It is clear

⁷Ibid., p. 77.

⁸Mason's discussion is his "Race and Race Relations," and Locke's essay is his "The Concept of Race as Applied to Social Culture," Howard Review I (1924).

⁹E. D. Mason, "Race and Race Relations," p. 11.

on even a casual reading of Locke that, though we must live with our particular institutions and their supporting values, we need not (as he puts it) hypostasize them. Freedom from hypostasis consists in embracing a relativism "which reveals our values in proper objective perspective with other sets of values"¹⁰ which will clarify the basic unity of the values of all, and help us move beyond ego and ethnocentrism. The delicate tension running through all of Locke's work—for which these essays serve as clear examples—is a tension between an anti-foundationalist relativism and a naturalist realism.

This difficult position informs a variety of other arguments Locke advances, including those on communication, cognitive life and language use. In fact, I take Locke to be important in the African American tradition, in view particularly of his critical relativism, because he went a long way towards accomplishing three feats in these and other areas which some of his nineteenth century predecessors could not: (1) he showed how cultural theory can accommodate traditionally African American concerns, such as "race" and "civilization" or uplift, while avoiding problematic ontological commitments to racialist categories; (2) his broad understanding of continental Africa and its relation to diasporan African and Caribbean America enabled intellectuals to maintain an internationalist focus while at the same time

¹⁰Locke, "Pluralism and Intellectual Democracy," in The Philosophy of Alain Locke, p. 59.

keenly attending to vernacular culture; and (3)—of greatest concern for the present discussion—he articulated a sophisticated theoretical program for how language and cognition play key roles in both moral and aesthetic experience, providing a rich account showing how values can be central to experience without entailing absolutism in its many varieties. Note that his analysis of moral and aesthetic experience is intended broadly, so as to encompass ordinary life in all its dimensions.

The above mentioned second point—that Locke balances internationalist and nationalist arguments—has been treated in Locke scholarship rather nicely, notably by Mason and J. Washington, especially concerning the idea of the "New Negro." Locke mediated the tension between nationalism (the view that culture originates from within the "soil" of a given group) and internationalism (the view that culture can be enjoyed at an international level by adopting a world perspective) by a principle of reciprocity derived from his relativism: that each group should develop its own culture, but shouldn't guard over it like a piece of property; cultural products on this approach belong to world civilization.¹¹

However, the reading of Locke as anti-foundationalist (or as he is sometimes seen, as a deconstructivist) is less adequate, particularly on points (1) and (3). He does in fact

¹¹J. Washington, Alain Locke and Philosophy: A Quest for Cultural Pluralism (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), pp. 168-193.

share affinities with contemporary deconstructive philosophy: consider the anti-foundationalism running through much of his writing about reason's ability to deliver truths which are stable across belief systems, as well as his criticisms of the failure of naturalists like William James to examine their assumptions of empirical objectivity in science. Although he shares these concerns with deconstructivists, Locke departs sharply in important ways from them. For one thing, while he doubts some accounts of stability across belief systems, he does locate stability across types of experience in thoroughly naturalistic structures, a position most deconstructive thinkers would never accept. This is hardly a principled rejection of the stability of reason; rather, it is reason's redemption. In fact, it's not clear what he is anti-foundationalist about given the deep ways his arguments rely on notions about stable and rationally articulable properties of human activities. Besides, Locke's self-consciousness about how far-reaching objectivity claims are doesn't go all the way down as, say, J. Derrida's seems to. He was suspicious of empiricist approaches, not because they were naturalist, but because they failed to see naturalism of meaning in theories of truth and knowledge as itself susceptible to analysis. He regarded a thoroughgoing naturalistic theory of value as desirable—and contemporary naturalism as being the appropriate theoretical starting point to carry such a program out. This is hardly the research program of a deconstructivist or an anti-foundationalist.

What L. Harris, an important philosopher who takes seriously the anti-foundationalist reading of Locke, has identified as deconstructive in Locke's thought has much to do with Locke's sustained critique of absolutism. Actually, Locke has three distinct critiques of absolutism, each with different implications for anti-foundationalism: a procedural or formal critique, an ethical critique and an ontological critique. His procedural critique is a reading of absolutism as closing off procedural options in discussion, limiting available strategies for arriving at theoretical truths and practical norms. As such it comes under a theory of argument, bearing (for instance) on ethical argumentation. His ethical critique focuses on how ethical norms are largely arbitrary, where certain norms of action are held as morally superior to other norms, as in cases of value intolerance. As such it comes under a theory of justification, continuous with moral and political philosophy. This ethical critique can be extended to his psychological account of what makes imperatives categorical, when they are.¹² His ontological critique consists of a cognitive analysis of valuation experience, showing all such experiences to be explainable in terms of naturalistic cognitive phenomena. As such this latter critique comes under the-

¹²As such it has both moral and (in the case of many deontological writers in moral philosophy) logical import, since imperatives are categorical, if they are, in virtue of the logic of moral reasoning.

ories of mind and language, as well as the ontology of value theory.

While there is no question that Locke is anti-foundationalist with respect to the ethical and (probably) the procedural critiques of absolutism, he remains resolutely realist on ontological questions of cognition in experience. As per my argument above, he accepted the claim that there was a fact of the matter in cultural inquiry, and he depended on such ontological entities as "culture types" in causal explanations of social phenomena. This issue bears quite directly on his view of semantic "distance" in communication, for values—in Locke's terms—stand in a particular relation to abstract symbols, including linguistic symbols.

For these reasons I believe the deconstructive reading of Locke to be only partially illuminating—as regards his ethical and formal critiques of absolutism, for instance—but it clouds his ontological arguments which in fact support important claims he advances, claims which in fact constitute his distinctive contributions to philosophy.

In the greater part of this section I have been concerned with a variety of meta-theoretical positions Locke espoused, and how those positions should be treated in scholarship on Locke. The connection with meaning and knowledge arises in so far as Locke is realist about cognitive attitudes. Thus, he sees the prospects for norms of language use, in regulating access to meanings, as promising, since the requisite cognitive apparatus is unproblematically in place.

Clearing aside the deconstructive objection, then, is important in establishing the claims about speaker and conventional meaning. I begin that discussion in the next section.

4.3 / SPEAKER MEANING AND SYMBOL MEANING: THE SEMANTIC DISTANCE THESIS

In this section I argue that Locke's cultural analysis only makes sense against the deeper semantic account he advances, as well as his more sustained accounts of mind and language. If these views can be understood, Locke can take his place as a key thinker in African American philosophy of knowledge and language, in that he frames both how preceding debates on language and mind in the African American tradition are to be approached, as well as what subsequent tradition must address in order to adequately treat language and mind. No discussion of semantic assumptions and arguments in African American philosophy, either before or after Locke, can be had without addressing his work.

Locke advocates the Semantic Distance Thesis, which he begins to work out in light of a semantic link he discusses, making the point that critical relativism (discussed in the preceding section)

breaks down the worship of the form--that dangerous identification of the symbol with the value, which is the prime psychological root of the fallacies and errors we have been discussing. We might pose it as the acid test for an enlightened value loyalty that is able to distinguish between the symbol and form of its loyalty and the essence and objective of that loyalty. Such critical insight, for example, would recognize a real basic similarity or functional

equivalence in other values, even when cloaked in considerable superficial difference.¹³

In an essay on education he makes a related point:

Thus there could be derived from critical relativism a corrective discipline aimed at the undermining of dogma-forming attitudes in thinking and the elimination of the partisan hundred percentist mentality at its very psychological roots.¹⁴

He argues that semantics deals with this at a deeper level which "search[es] out the mechanisms of dogmatic thinking and expose[s] the fallacies of symbol identification and the like."¹⁵

For Locke the semantic link with his arguments on culture rests on his claim that there exists a distance between symbol and its value—call this the Semantic Distance Thesis. Stated more formally, it is the view that there is a divergence of meaning between symbols and what they symbolize. By advancing this view he rejects the view that symbols are identical to the values they contain—namely the Semantic Identity Thesis held by Crummell. When applied to linguistic symbols, the Distance Thesis becomes the modern linguistic view that words are semantically distinguishable from the mental ideas they contain; symbol and form fall on one side of a divide, while essence and objective fall on the other.

¹³A. Locke, "Pluralism and Intellectual Democracy," p. 60.

¹⁴Locke, "The Need for a New Organon in Education," in The Philosophy of Alain Locke, p. 273.

¹⁵Ibid.

When expanded throughout communicative situations, this isn't just a semantic fact, but a fact about interpretation as well, given that that distance in meaning has to be accounted for in communicative uptake. In other words, if words don't semantically correspond to mental ideas in the speaker's mind (as on the Identity Thesis), then auditors in communication situations don't have to be mind readers to interpret what is meant by what is said. But what then do they have to read?

This is where Locke's realism enters the picture. I argue that he is a realist as concerns the cognitive basis for rational access to norms regulating use, particularly in linguistic interpretation. The Semantic Distance Thesis preempts a move to "mind reading" in communication—the psychologism Crummell embraced—and so requires another kind of access. Locke clearly holds that some form of access is possible; his analysis of value experience depends on cognitive structures accessing public norms.¹⁶ No non-arbitrary distinction can be made between public norms of language use and public norms for using logical concepts, scientific truths in law-like generalizations, or social facts in ethical reasoning, all of which Locke explicitly analyzes on his cognitive realist account. So, a consistently Lockean position would seem to justifiably extend to cognitive structures accessing, for instance, such publicly available linguistic norms of referring

¹⁶Locke, "Values and Imperatives," in The Philosophy of Alain Locke, p. 31-50.

and meaning. Indeed, the fact that he regards social action as so critically depending on cooperative public norm recognition compels the reading that he is optimistic about the possibility for negotiating semantic and interpretive distance in communication. Rather, he is realist about the cognitive basis for that negotiation. Structures are available for semantic access, and those structures are ontologically real—they can be used in causal social explanations.

What's especially significant about these ontological and linguistic shifts Locke introduces into the debate on African American speech is that the prevailing empiricist model of "word" and "idea" semantic identity can be replaced with a naturalized linguistic view, on which utterances inherit their semantic properties from the cognitive attitudes of speakers, rather than standing in a content identity relation with those attitudes. That is, instead of positing semantic identity between mental state and linguistic symbol, a theoretical device is available to distinguish how cognitive attitudes are semantically evaluable from the capability of semantically evaluating sentences (and thus, by extension, utterances). By "semantic evaluability" I mean to indicate how users of a language determine the meaning components of utterances.¹⁷ The now-widely accepted view of language and

¹⁷I borrow this phrase from J. A. Fodor, Psychosemantics: The Problem of Meaning in the Philosophy of Mind (Cambridge, MA: Bradford Books of the MIT Press, 1987), especially p. 55-96.

thought thus finds in Locke its earliest sustained expression in the African American philosophical tradition.

Locke uses this device to advance the view on which competent speakers enter contexts of interaction by forging specifically social identities based on naturalistic psycholinguistic facts. He shares the view some pragmatists held, that personal and ethical identity is always tied to socializing processes, those always being tied to a determinate moral culture of the community in which one is being socialized.¹⁸ By "moral culture" I mean the norms, values and imperatives a community holds and attempts to transmit in various forms of expression, exhortation and the like; I intend in using this term to suggest that these have systemic character. Given this view, Locke is able to see communicative processes (themselves interactional by definition) as part and parcel with a community's efforts to socialize individuals within its moral culture. Socializing one's identity happens via communicative interaction contexts, and interaction contexts themselves do ethical work by their very nature. It follows that the burden of effective and appropriate communication, on this view, is to link what is communicated to one's identity, as defined within that moral culture—that systemic set of moral links throughout the community. Moreover, the very process of communication becomes important—

¹⁸For example, G. H. Mead, Mind, Self, and Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist, edited by C. W. Morris (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

even central—in the ongoing moral life of such a community and its members.

If this is plausible, then semantic distance resolves a tension: if in communicating, participants are involved in establishing their ethical identities, then the competence to recognize how propositional meaning and pragmatic utterance use are related though distinct becomes paramount to community members relating themselves to complex backgrounds of available social roles within that community. In different terms: a person can be multifaceted within a social context making extremely complex psychological demands on them only to the extent that they can access complex symbol systems, using them in similarly complex ways.

A speaker can thus (for instance) use language to convey a given meaning, exploiting a semantic distance between a symbol's conventional meaning and a speaker's intended meaning, and in so doing establish solidarity with an auditor who recognizes that that distance is being exploited. F. Douglass discusses this kind of maneuver when he analyzes the songs of enslaved Africans;¹⁹ by uttering (in song) words with literal semantic content deemed inoffensive, even placating, to the slaveholding class, the slave community was able to convey that meaning to that class with the (intended) effect that slaveholders would be reassured that all was well with the

¹⁹Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass. The Classic Slave Narratives, edited by H. L. Gates (New York: Mentor Books of Penguin, 1987).

disposition of enslaved persons. However, Douglass argues that those very words, uttered as they were in the particular context of utterance, suggested quite forcefully to other members of the community the sorrows of the slave's life. These sorrows and their communication played a significant part in helping establishing the identities of the enslaved, reassuring them that they remained fully human despite their situation. Much the same could probably be said about any population in such dire straits as these: the development of forms of language use which assist in locating the identities of the members of the speech community within a determinate moral culture, thereby establishing the ethical dimensions of what it means to be a human, replete with the values and norms of that community.

An instructive comparison can be made here with H. Gates's account of vernacular speech.²⁰ Gates argues that vernacular speech in the African American community accomplishes a shift from standard usage at the level of semantic meaning; when speakers in the community use a term, they avail themselves of novel semantic content, introducing at that deep level a distinctive dimension of the linguistic resources a community enjoys. He then goes on to argue that vernacular speech employs rhetorical devices—what he calls tropes—to help accomplish this semantic innovation.

²⁰H. L. Gates, The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

While his account has been important in literary theory, particularly vernacular theory, it introduces an opacity at precisely the analytical unit we should like to clarify, namely the meaning relation among symbol, speaker and speech community. What sort of novelty is being claimed for the vernacular speaker such that communication becomes possible? If the novelty consists of new "meanings" in some radical semantic sense, then how could sense be made of it by an auditor? How do participants in communication draw from the same resources if those resources are by their very nature new and different? This is a problem for deconstructive readings of the communicative situation in general, Gates' included. Gates makes recourse to rhetorical dimensions of speech to locate some point of stability in communicative acts. Tropes such as recurring symbols and figures of speech in speech practices, it seems on his account, stabilize interpretive description of novel meanings. But this doesn't seem to be the sort of thing which could provide that stability across communicative acts. Rhetorical aspects of speech are defined in terms of their location within a speech context. If tropes and symbols are to stabilize interpretation, then reference must be made (on Gates' account) to some feature of the situation which can then inform the auditor of the significance of this symbol in this context; the most likely candidate for that stability would be semantic, but that move is precisely what is not available. It's not clear that tropes and symbols can be stabilized for a community except in virtue of some

semantic content, constant over time and commonly available. The limits of Gates' analysis are apparent in his discussion of Douglass on slave songs. He argues that, in Douglass' account, African American speakers were able to communicate to one another without the slaveholding class having access to correct interpretations because "the blacks were using antiphonal structures to reverse their apparent meaning, as a mode of encoding for self-preservation."²¹ But even here, Gates draws on a semantic concept—"apparent meaning"—to indicate how the slaveholding class was misled as to correct interpretation. It seems that that apparent meaning is precisely what is being related to differently in pragmatic use by vernacular speakers and auditors in that context.

This is where Locke's analysis is helpful. If the semantic basis of communication is left largely intact—constant and commonly available—then we can recognize as novel the relation between a speaker's cognitive attitude (speaker meaning) and the meaning of the symbols they employ in a speech act situation. Rather than putting too heavy a burden on rhetorical devices, the burden may more appropriately be placed on structural features of utterances and the minds by which they are employed. Locke, rather than Gates, gives us more to work with in our transition to a pragmatic account of vernacular speech.

²¹Ibid., p. 67.

The account of interpretation Locke is left with, given the semantic distance move, is to appeal either to speaker presuppositions for rationally motivated agreement in communicative action²² or to speaker epistemics for constructing social identity, rationally motivated but naturalistically constrained by psychological structural features; he makes the latter move. Communicative competence (as I've been showing) is worked out for Locke in terms of these structural features.

Interpretation requires recognizing connections between symbol meaning and speaker cognitive attitudes which can only be explicated in terms of social identity formation. Locke sees that explication as tied to propositional truth as well as socialization processes by which speakers develop appropriate competences to communicate.

Locke introduces a moral dimension (both a reflexive dimension, pertaining to identity formation, and an evaluative dimension, pertaining to cognitive and emotive demands) into communicative language as follows: entitlement to establish validity claims in speech is distributed as a function of a speaker's relation to resources for moral reflexivity, where personal identity formation contributes to communicative competence, identity construed socially and interactively with

²²A move J. Habermas characteristically makes; for instance, The Theory of Communicative Action: Reason and the Rationalization of Society, vol. I, translated by T. McCarthy (Boston: Beacon, 1984).

reference to membership within a speech community. Entitlement is also distributed as a function of a speaker's relation to resources for moral evaluation, where value (whether moral, aesthetic, logical, scientific, and religious) contributes to communicative competence, and is determined in relation to community norms of valuation. Those resources, both cognitive and linguistic, are effective to the extent that they support a speech community's collective development in a variety of cultural spheres.

4.4 / SEMANTIC AND PRAGMATIC PROBLEMS

Despite their strengths and improvements over Crummell's accounts, there are still difficulties with Locke's arguments. Rejecting psychologism about meaning doesn't imply that mental states no longer play a role in determining the extension of terms. If meanings are abstract entities, such as propositions, there remains the issue of how they are grasped by users of a language. Clearly, then, there remains the issue of the mental states of a given language user in the disambiguating of meaning and language use.

The question for Locke is whether his analysis of cognition in valuational experience can be extended to communicative situations. Though we can't simply extend the analysis, since Locke gives no clear direction on how to do that, we can reconstruct the account to meet the objection raised above.

As I explain above, the closest we can bring Locke, given his explicit discussions, is to have public access to linguistic norms through naturalized epistemic pathways. We communicate—or at least interpret—on the basis of our recognition of the semantic distance between symbol and the content it expresses, ascribing content to such expressions through recognizing norms which regulate from the background of shared social knowledge, both local (vernacular and cultural) and global (standard, hieratic, and cross-cultural) which includes knowledge of social roles and cultural identity.

If Locke is committed to the divergence of psychological and linguistic content in rendering correct interpretive descriptions of utterances, and if our cognitive access to those descriptions is limited to recognizing this divergence, then either we are left with no way to fix which interpretive descriptions are correct, and they are underdetermined by our linguistic knowledge (the recognition of divergence), or we fix correct descriptions by referring to background social knowledge, but then we can never correctly interpret given the vastness of the background knowledge we have access to, making communication impossible.

What's needed is access to some set of presumptions in communication which establish what range of interpretive descriptions is likely to be correct. Locke may have in fact adumbrated such a view, in his urgency account. However, his analysis of psychological urgency establishes moral impera-

tives in practical reasoning, and so can only plausibly be extended to normative dimensions of interpretive description, either in interpreting normative utterances such as commands and requests, or else in assessing a speaker's right to make some utterance in light of their social role.

If Locke cannot respond to the sort of objection I'm raising, it's not clear how far we have moved beyond Crummell's psychologism. Locke's Semantic Distance Thesis, in fact, would appear to be confusing meaning and extension, given that the divergence in question is not between content and content in different communicative situations, but between content and the range of terms over which it extends. If this is so, then Locke hasn't shown Crummell's semantic identity to be dispensable in accounts of communication.

There is also the objection that Locke's analysis might not succeed for establishing normative communication. Showing that norms have pull on how we act doesn't suffice to show that they should have pull—particularly if they don't in fact have pull. So, naturalizing the account of norm construction in social interaction doesn't capture the crucial normative dimension of that interaction, when it is normative.

Another unresolved tension in Locke's argument is that the deep structures which he terms "cognitive cognates" must be specifiable—their semantic content must be determinable, at least in principle—within a system of such contents for them to function semantically in interpretation. There seems

to be no clear way to do this on his naturalistic account, since, if meaning is constituted as part of a system of cultural communicative processes, then it remains a conceptual difficulty assessing one element as such in that system. That is, if we must be semantic holists about how interpreters evaluate, then we lose our account of how we evaluate utterances produced by speakers whose systems of meaning we don't substantially share.

These difficulties, however, need not be fatal to the account; Locke's argument, particularly in the ways it advances Crummell's account beyond its own problems, remains important to the account I seek. Let me now show how these arguments bear on that account.

4.5 / SPEAKER MEANING, SYMBOL MEANING AND SOCIAL FACTS

Let me show how Locke's analysis contributes to a sound account of interpretation. I begin by stating the Lockean result from the foregoing sections as a thesis about knowledge and meaning. Members of a speech community access both wide and local social knowledges. Wide social knowledge has as its object such social facts as the historical and institutional bases for speaker warrant to use a particular linguistic symbol in a particular context. Local social knowledge, on the other hand, has as its object such social facts as speaker and auditor relationship and (what may be called) intimate history, as well as facts about other non-institutional features of social roles. Recognizing how symbol meaning and

speaker cognitive attitude are differentially semantically evaluable, as Locke maintains, is thus (in part) a function of regulative norms of warrant which social knowledge accesses.

For Locke, members of a speech community access both wide and local social knowledges. By "wide" knowledge I mean knowledge which accesses facts established independently of the relationship of speaker and auditor, facts which may be loosely described in terms of institutional features of the communication context. These include such features as, for example, the fact of one's being a professor or being a student, or their being a doctor or a patient, features describable in terms parasitic on the existence of some institution. To these facts may be added such historical facts as the sets of social expectations and limitations accumulated over time and prevalent in a community.

These wide social facts—both historical and institutional—are linked to language use in that they serve as bases for a speaker's warrant in using a particular linguistic symbol in a particular context. A speaker has access to a given use of a given symbol provided they have established (or, presumably, could establish, at least in principle) the relevant conditions of warrant, given the institutional role they occupy. For instance the utterance

take these three times daily

is only available for a speaker to produce with warrant if that speaker stands in the institutional role of physician.

Local social knowledge, on the other hand, has as its object such social facts as speaker and auditor relationship and (what may be called) intimate history. By "local" knowledge I mean knowledge which accesses facts established by the actual relationship between speaker and auditor, facts which may be loosely described in terms of personal, psychosocial and a variety of other features unique to (a set of) communication contexts. Local social knowledge also has—as object—facts about other non-institutional features of social roles, including how utterances have previously been used, and thus interpreted; among these facts are coinages, slang or other lexical departures from more common usage. These facts differ from the facts which wide knowledge accesses by what they deliver. Facts accessed by local knowledge give communicative participants what they need in order to describe their context in terms which resist abstraction; these terms are established over time for a given set of speakers in a given set of communicative contexts. Facts accessed by wide knowledge, by contrast, give such participants what they need in order to describe their context in terms which just are abstract.

This sort of distinction which I build from Locke's account has the theoretical advantage that it provides an analysis of context showing how social facts are established both distally and locally. In the theory of interpretation, then, we can begin to say how social roles of all sorts contribute to one's warrant to produce vernacular utterances.

Furthermore, using Locke's account, the tie to interpretation is to be fleshed out in terms of how communicative participants recognize how symbol meaning and speaker cognitive attitude are differentially semantically evaluable. Implicit in that recognition is the action of regulative norms of warrant which social knowledge accesses. Norms of warrant constrain what may be said by whom and how; semantic evaluability of utterances constrains how speaker and symbols mean. Knowledge of roles (and their associated norms) may be coupled with semantic evaluability in that, how meaningful linguistic symbols may be used in speech acts generates a range of possible interpretive descriptions of those symbols. If the semantic content of cognitive attitude and sentence diverge, the set of possible descriptions will be that much larger and the interpretive indeterminacy that much greater. However, introducing the knowledge of social roles and their associated norms constrain the range of descriptions. That is, given a set of wide facts about institutional features of context and relevant speaker warrants, as well as local facts about personal features of context and warrants, social knowledge can close the indeterminacy which differential semantic evaluability (taken alone) entails.

So, while Crummell appreciates the fact that interpretation is always a problem of membership in a speech community and what that membership buys you semantically, Locke's basic insight is that personal identity is differentiable in terms of what utterances may contain and thus express. Such proper-

ties attach to utterances as a function of the entitlements a speaker enjoys, which are in turn a function of how one's identity locates them within a speech community. Once this is recognized it may be more precisely shown, using a validity claims analysis from speech act theory (such as Habermas'), just how identity is differentiable in pragmatic terms. This is taken up in chapter five.

CHAPTER 5

MEANING AND SOCIAL FACTS

This dissertation has passed through two large phases. In phase one—chapters one and two—I showed how research on vernacular speech casts philosophically interesting issues in sharp relief, particularly that of the kinds of knowledge participants in communication need access to in order to interpret utterances. This issue suggests what terms a fuller account needs in order to seriously engage the social dimensions of that knowledge. The second phase of the dissertation—chapters three and four—consists of my attempt to reconstruct a philosophical history of the account of social knowledge which phase one suggests is desirable. Because the empirical work on vernacular speech has largely focused on the African American speech community, I reconstruct a portion of writing on that particular community; I develop my reconstruction with the goal of saying how social knowledge is to be accounted for. I explore the notion, advanced by Crummell, that language use is tied to both an individual's social status within a speech community. Though I showed that

Crummell's semantic and cognitive account depends on mistaken claims about how linguistic elements relate to psychological states, I made explicit (in the process) an insight into how social facts about communicative participants relate to patterns of interpretation within their speech community. Locke advances the view that language use turns on a speaker's ability to recognize, exploit and otherwise negotiate the distance between linguistic symbol and psychological state—or what we now should call the distinction between speaker meaning and conventional meaning. These sorts of competences provide speakers with forms of language rich enough to express and transmit norms and values within a moral culture.

In the present chapter I build the account of meaning and social facts by showing how those elements can be more precisely and systematically joined with an account of inference. In this way I bring phases one and two of the dissertation together. A key component of this concluding chapter is my (resumed and extended) discussion of Habermas, whose work I take to clarify how social facts come to bear on the logic of conversation.

5.1 / THE ARGUMENT OF THE CHAPTER

In this chapter I argue that the regulative background of speech consists in the nexus of resources which competent speakers in a speech community draw from to correctly interpret utterances. These resources constrain the distribution of entitlements in that community, thus regulating the inter-

pretation of utterances. To establish this out of my discussions of Crummell and Locke in earlier chapters, I follow Habermas on how communicative participants presume the rationality of speakers and the claims to validity they (implicitly) make; I largely endorse his corollary view that utterances are understood in virtue of the conditions on which they are acceptable to auditors. I discuss a difficulty his views introduce, however, but propose a remedy which makes processes of inference more central to understanding. I show finally how social facts play a role in interpretation, reconstructing the arguments and positions of both Crummell and Locke.

5.2 / HOW IS BACKGROUND SOCIAL KNOWLEDGE REGULATIVE?

At the end of chapters three and four—sections 3.5 and 4.5 respectively—I showed how Crummell's and Locke's work can both generate and support an analysis of social knowledge for a theory of interpretation. In this section I show how a validity claims analysis may be used to advance the argument concerning interpretive knowledge. Specifically, I show what such an analysis looks like, particularly in Habermas, and how it may provide the account of how communicative background is regulative. In the next section I continue my discussion of Habermas' validity claims, showing a difficulty which, I hold, proves instructive.

Habermas¹ has argued that participants in communication know the conditions on which validity claims raised in utterances can be accepted—that is, when an auditor can take a position on what they uptake during a speech act. Validity claims, which I introduced in section 2.3, name those tacit claims speakers raise in virtue of participating in speech act situations. Habermas argues that auditors and speakers alike presuppose that these claims can be successfully defended by speakers, if challenges were to be raised about whether a speaker had warrant to utter some sentence. Habermas contends that a speaker motivates an auditor with the illocutionary force of their utterance to uptake what is contained in a speech act, and thereby accede to a rationally motivated binding force. Among the rational motivations driving acceptance are propositional truth, as well as normative rightness and sincerity.

According to Habermas, "we understand a speech act when we know what makes it acceptable."² Utterances are always uttered within situations; so, when we know what makes them acceptable we know their sense, their force, along with a stock of empirical, normative, and practical knowledge. On this account, an utterance is acceptable if it satisfies conditions

¹Habermas, The Theory of Communicative Action: Reason and the Rationalization of Society, vol. I, translated by T. McCarthy (Boston: Beacon, 1984); Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays, translated by W. M. Hohengarten (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1992).

²The Theory of Communicative Action, p. 318.

necessary for an auditor to take an affirmative position on a speaker's claim, given their varied stock of knowledge. So, an auditor understands an utterance when they know (1) those conditions under which they could be motivated to take an affirmative position, (2) those grammatical conditions of well-formedness, and (3) general contextual conditions. Acceptability conditions include, more broadly, conditions of satisfaction—what an auditor has to do to bring about p —and conditions of agreement—when a speaker has good reasons for p to be valid. Good reasons here consist primarily of claims a speaker can appeal to which an auditor would find acceptable. In the case of normative utterances, an auditor observes obligations based on these two conditions; similarly, understanding empirical assertions requires that one know when speakers have good grounds to warrant that the assertion's truth conditions have been satisfied.³ Thus, to make an assertion just is to warrant that such conditions are satisfied. Both truth and warranted assertability, then, determine how speakers know acceptability conditions. (Note that knowing acceptability conditions is merely a presupposition for understanding situated utterances; knowing when an utterance is acceptable does not in itself amount to this understanding.)

Competence to correctly interpret involves being capable of taking up speaker and auditor roles in a variety of commu-

³Ibid.

nicative attitudes. Moreover, interaction is only possible when participants in communication are able to make and accept "offers" in speech acts (that is, auditor uptake of utterance content); communication is rational when those offers can be validated. He argues that these claims to validity can be of three kinds, corresponding to a system of communicative roles competent speakers know. First person roles are those whose validity claims constrain parameters limited to the speaker alone, namely those of sincerity and authenticity. Second person roles are those whose validity constraints range over speaker and auditor (social) relations, namely those of rightness and appropriateness. Third person roles are those whose validity claims constrain over objective states of affairs, namely those of truth and accuracy.

So, competent speakers learn first, second and third person roles with their corresponding expressive, norm conforming, and objectivating speaker attitudes. Within communicative speech situations competent speakers not only have access to these roles, attitudes, and constraints, but they in fact presuppose them. Accordingly, competence depends on speaker capacity to presuppose all three sets of pragmatic constraints, that is, to be able to infer from role to constraint, and from one constraint in a speaker role/attitude to that in another. On this picture, however, competence isn't comprised of rules, and so resists logical deduction. The relevant inferences, then, must be seen rather as con-

tributing to the mastery of various constitutive practical knowledges.

If Habermas' analysis is sound, then the structural features thought to be central to competence are constraint relationships, understood in the broad sense I just indicated, among a presupposed shared background of knowledge domains. More precisely, competence depends on speaker ability to both infer and shift in some distinctively practical sense from norm conformative (rightness) constraints of the illocutionary component of an utterance to objectivated (truth) constraints of the propositional component, or from expressive (sincerity) constraints of the expressive component to truth constraints, and conversely. Competence, then, amounts to a speaker's ability to make a set of appropriate inferences and practical shifts within communication, and interpreting utterances amounts to managing these shifts among validity claims.

Knowing acceptability conditions for empirical assertions, as an instance of competent speech practice, thus requires that an auditor be practically capable to correctly use given empirical predicates in the role of a speaker who is reporting their perceptions and experiences. This kind of knowledge is part of knowing propositional sense. For Habermas, being practically capable in this way is not simply a matter of deducing higher order constructions from empirical primitives. In fact, this kind of mastery operates (as I mention above), not merely at the level of deduction from

premises via rules of inference, but at all levels of the mastery of a natural language. It takes its place among the variety of abilities developed in language acquisition.

For this reason Habermas resists modeling competence in terms of rules of use which can regulate how the propositional component of utterances is produced, particularly as such rules are distinct from the practical components of how we know linguistic meaning. For Habermas, these practical aspects of language use have to be accounted for in all levels of the mastery of a natural language. There is no clearly marked out boundary between the propositional component (which can be framed as rules) and the practical component of our knowledge of meaning. There seems, then, to be a variety of knowledges which participants in communication have access to in order to know when a speaker has good grounds for making empirical assertions: (1) the propositional knowledge of sense, or what we may call conventional meaning; (2) the practical knowledge to use empirical predicates correctly; (3) the knowledge that a speaker has good reasons for asserting that p if they have seen (or otherwise perceptually grasped) that p ; and (4) a wealth of empirical knowledge (for example, knowledge of causal relations).

For empirical assertions (on this view) one's knowledge of when a speaker has good grounds amounts to a knowledge of the acceptability conditions for such assertions. Knowing acceptability conditions introduces a regulative component into

the analysis of the background of empirical assertions. Speakers have good grounds to assert, for example,

my watch is ten minutes slow,

when they meet acceptability conditions appropriate to this assertion, which depend on: (1) the literal or conventional meaning of the sentence asserted; (2) knowing how to use constitutive terms like "slow"; (3) the speaker's being in a position to read the watch and compare it to a reliable time-piece; and (4) whether the speaker can do such mundane things as figure out how the action and relative positions of watch-hands relate to time-reading. In this way empirical assertions are made against a regulative background. An auditor can then accept (that is, communicatively take up) what a speaker's speech act contains, given the internal connection between validity, validity claim, and the redemption of that claim—that is, the warranty for providing reasons that would survive an auditor's criticism of the validity claim. The binding force of the utterance is thus due, not to the validity of what is said, but to the coordinating effect—the ability to coordinate the actions, at a variety of levels, of participants in communication—of the warranty offered.⁴ Recognizing on what conditions utterances may be accepted—as a

⁴This sort of point, which runs throughout the Habermasian analysis, derives from his secondary concern (from the perspective of the present study) to situate language use within a larger theory of communicative action. I need not pursue that here, however.

function of the three sorts of validity claims—is therefore tantamount to communicative competence.

While the foregoing analysis pertains to empirical assertion, an ambiguity arises concerning the normative validity claims connected with regulative utterances in the imperative form.⁵ Consider proposition *p*,

5.2.1 *A* sits down.

Expressed normatively, as on a request or recommendation, (5.2.1) can take the form

5.2.2 *A* may sit down;

expressed in an imperative form, as on a directive or command, (5.2.1) can take the form

5.2.3 *A*, sit down!

It is fairly straightforward to relate the normative validity claim of an imperative utterance like (5.2.3) directly to the propositional content (5.2.1) of some explicitly formulated regulative utterance, such as (5.2.2). In this example, the normative validity claim would simply be the claim that the action commanded of the auditor is in some sense right and permitted. The imperative form may be replaced by the normative regulative utterance whose content it shares, and still preserve its normative force. This can be taken to be a wide sense of regulative, turning as it does on a specifiable normative validity claim connected with conventional proposi-

⁵I owe this point to F. Kirkland, in correspondence and conversation.

tional content. Directly relating a normative validity claim to the propositional content of imperative utterances, then, reveals their close connection. On a narrow sense of regulative utterance, however, the connection becomes problematic: the attendant normative validity claim is connected not so much to conventional meaning, but to utterance meaning. These cases consist of instances where an utterance's propositional content becomes normatively loaded only in the act of being uttered. Reconsider (5.2.3), taking **A** to be a soldier under speaker **S**'s authority. In this case the normative validity claim tied to imperative utterance binds in virtue of the illocutionary component of the utterance. This is due to the obligation **A** has, arising not from conventional meaning 5.2.1, but from meaning accruing in the act of uttering, or utterance meaning. Speaker **S** barking the command (5.2.3) on the battlefield obligates **A** in a way distinct from the obligation which proposition **p** confers on its own. Normative validity claims raised implicitly with such utterances are thus sensitive to the very acts by which they are raised in speech act situations.

Habermas seems not to appreciate these two distinct senses of the regulative background of speech acts. On his account, he argues for a regulative conception of the communicative background, but in so doing treats utterances at times as being normatively loaded through illocutionary features, and at other times treats utterances as being redeemable via normative validity claims. The consequence of

not distinguishing these two senses is that the mechanism through which background regulates is obscured. Habermas cannot, for instance, effectively account for what makes the directive (5.2.3) regulative without referring either to its social coordinating role or to its relevant validity claim. It is possible to show, however, that such a directive might regulate for no other reason than that its force gives it regulative power. Consider

5.2.4 tell **A** to sit down.

The regulative dimension of (5.2.4) derives primarily from its being uttered, and particularly in being uttered as a request. The additional place introduced by the speaker's use of the third person—**S** tells **T** to tell **A** to sit down—makes this feature more stark. This is because **T**, as the addressee, cannot be directly obligated unless **S** utters this sentence in just this way.

Utterance meaning is thus very important to how utterances are both regulative and regulated. In fact, especially given the fact that utterances are always multiply embedded in actual situations, utterance meaning of regulative speech acts serves to link utterance features with features of the determinate moral culture against which participants communicate. Here a connection may be made with Locke's account, that a speaker engages in communicative acts and, in so doing, invokes moral cultural elements. Note however, that Locke's argument may be weaker than Habermas', in that Habermas gives a fairly strong aprioristic argument for these

sorts of links. Participants, he argues, presuppose that regulative dimensions of speech acts bind, given the successful redemption (at least in principle) of relevant validity claims, simply in virtue of entering speech act situations. Locke's account is much less aprioristic on this point, depending instead on largely aposteriori premises, that cognitive attitude and symbol meaning may bear divergent semantic content, and so there arises the need in communication for a competence to use normatively loaded speech in ways which are not derailed by this (potential) semantic divergence. Locke argues from an aposteriori fact about meaning and content adopting a notably weak position, rather than from constitutive features of communicative practices.⁶

Social knowledge, given the lines indicated here in Habermas, and incorporating Locke and Crummell from sections 3.5 and 4.5, is thus regulative in how speaker entitlements are distributed throughout the speech community. That is, having access to social facts ranging over roles which position speakers within a moral culture enables one to evaluate a given speaker's warrant to use language in a particular

⁶Indeed, this may be a source of difficulty for Habermasian readers of Locke, who may be dissatisfied with Locke's attempt to ground an explicitly critical theory on naturalistic grounds. Because he goes this route, he quite readily avails himself of aposteriori premises. By so doing, however, he trades away the aprioristic leverage Habermasian readers value so highly. In compromising the built-in character of communicative appeals, Locke (Habermasians may charge) has undermined his own attempt at a cultural theory which can properly be thought of as critical.

way, whether in virtue of conventional meaning and its related validity claims—wide regulative character—or else in virtue of utterance meaning and its relation to regulative dimensions of speech—narrow regulative character.

5.3 / MEANING, UNDERSTANDING AND THE REGULATIVE BACKGROUND

In this section I continue discussing Habermas, raising another difficulty with his account. I raise it, however, in a constructive and sympathetic tone, as I see the resolution of this difficulty to show a final clearing toward completing the analysis of meaning and social knowledge. While some critics of Habermas have seen his attempts to tie interpretation to validity claims regulating "from the background" as an effort to jettison truth conditional semantics, this is a mistaken reading. Habermas, as I have explained in the preceding section, claims that to understand an assertion is to know when a speaker has good grounds to warrant that the conditions for the truth of an asserted proposition are satisfied. The issue is not to verify truth, but rather to coordinate the relation of truth and warranted assertability in the light of the pragmatic knowledge presupposed for interpreting situated utterances; hence Habermas' pragmatic expansion (as he calls it) of truth conditional semantics.

So, given his pragmatic expansion of semantics, the general picture of meaning and understanding in Habermas is that we mean by uttering in accord with defensible validity claims—by uttering warranted propositions—and we understand

by recognizing how and under what conditions these claims indeed are defensible. The virtue of this view is the close tie it explicates between meaning and understanding, allowing them to be linked within a theory of language. The difficulties with this view, however, are two-fold: (1) it tends to collapse the crucial distinction between meaning and understanding we should like to maintain, despite their close ties, and (2) it largely subverts the prescriptive aspects of linguistic understanding.

Meaning and understanding must be seen as distinct yet related components of a theory of language. The account of meaning in Habermas' picture, however, is overloaded. In fact, his account of meaning is premised on the claim that "[a] theory of meaning should answer the question: what is it to understand the sense of a—well-formed—symbolic expression?"⁷ Because he starts with this claim he attempts to show the importance of accounting for how we understand when accounting for how we mean: in other words, a sound theory of meaning for Habermas is also at the same time a sound theory of understanding. Thus he argues that pragmatic meaning is tied to validity claims in that we mean in virtue of effective speech action—in coordinating action, reaching consensus and understanding. But that isn't a matter of meaning so much as it's a matter of how we come to use meaningful utterances, and finally to understand such utterances.

⁷Postmetaphysical Thinking, p. 57.

This problem becomes more evident in Habermas' acceptability thesis, that we know what an utterance means when we know those conditions on which a competent auditor would find it acceptable. On this thesis, understanding is a function of whether pragmatic meaning meets conditions for acceptance. The acceptability thesis compels us, back-pedaling from the overloaded demands placed upon pragmatic meaning, to have meaning somehow take on all three validity relations. That is, if we accept the meaning of an utterance, then we must be able to redeem the relevant validity claims raised by that utterance. But why should normative rightness or even appropriateness be borne by the meaning component of utterances? This kind of move in Habermas brings issues of conventional meaning into the domain of specifically pragmatic issues by contextualizing them via these validity claims which support the relation to the three context dimensions which correspond to speaker role/attitudes (the subjective, the objective and the social). This is misleading at best, and mistaken at worst.

Another problem arising from saturating questions of pragmatic meaning with questions of warrant is that, when the stress is placed in this way, it pushes the attendant account of understanding too far towards a strong acceptability account, introducing further epistemological tangles along the way and—my second difficulty with Habermas' picture of meaning and understanding—neutralizing appropriately prescriptive dimensions of use and interpretation.

Communicative uptake cannot simply be a matter of recognizing when utterances are acceptable, as on Habermas' postulate. It must have some independent criterion for securing how and when they are uttered with warrant. We should certainly recognize how communicative uptake is tied to acceptability, but we should also just as certainly hold that acceptability be secured on a participant independent basis. We need not know when utterances are deemed acceptable to hearers, but rather when hearers should indeed accept utterances. An auditor should accept an utterance, not because that auditor is in an appropriate epistemological position to accept the relevant conditions, but because a norm can be appealed to which secures that auditor's obligation. Society's laws exploit this point all the time: it's no defense to say "I didn't know the speed limit" or even "I couldn't see the sign." The necessary and sufficient condition warranting an officer's pronouncement of traffic violation is the existence of a law on the books.

This is partly why Habermas' appeal to M. Dummett's argument,⁸ that auditors fail to evaluate truth conditions for some important classes of utterances, loses its forcefulness. This sort of argument only works if a theory of understanding is simply articulating whether and how acceptability condi-

⁸For example, see Dummett, "What is a Theory of Meaning?" in Mind and Language: Wolfson College Lectures 1974, edited by S. D. Guttenplan (Oxford: Clarendon Press of Oxford University Press, 1975).

tions are established. Focusing on which conditions should be established diminishes the relevance of epistemological counterarguments based on auditor access.

It may be argued in Habermas' defense, though, that a comparison with Wittgenstein brings to light the strengths of this analysis. In fact, a parallel may be drawn between Habermas' postulate—"we understand a speech act when we know what makes it acceptable"—and the postulate of the Wittgenstein of the Tractatus—"to understand a proposition means to know what is the case if it is true."⁹ Wittgenstein took this postulate to explain an attendant principle of meaning. Habermas, on the other hand, takes his postulate to both explain a principle of meaning and to be self-explanatory. Habermas' postulate for empirical assertions is thus not intended as a basic constructive principle in the theory of meaning, but instead shows how the insights of truth semantics are to be incorporated into a theory of language use. Their postulates thus lead in different directions, namely, the shift from Wittgenstein's logical semantic analysis to Habermas' formal pragmatic analysis of empirical assertions. To the extent this is so, formal pragmatics tries to rework a different kind of linguistic knowledge than does truth semantics. It addresses in a general way what place semantic prob-

⁹This point I owe to F. Kirkland, in conversation and correspondence. See L. Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, translated by C. K. Ogden (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1922), § 4.024.

lems have within a pragmatic account of language. Again, however, the emphasis Habermas places on accounting for meaning in a theory of language understanding threatens to unravel the distinct strengths of his analysis.

These strengths become more apparent if Habermas' discussion of the acceptability of utterances is seen as an explication of Wittgenstein's thesis of using language "according to rules."¹⁰ There is something intuitive about the notion that what a speaker can mean with an utterance and what an auditor can understand as the sense of the utterance is defined by the knowledge of the acceptability conditions of utterances. Knowledge of meaning is practical because it designates a specific competence and cannot be totally represented as a tacit propositional knowledge. In language use, for the most part, we follow rules "blindly," that is, we do not have a choice among words or interpretations. We show that we know a rule when we follow it. Knowing in this sense is direct and immediate when it expresses one's own competence to employ the expressions and sentences used by the speaker for one's own purposes and in a way appropriate to the situation. Moreover, if utterances are always utterances in contexts or situations, then making and interpreting utterances is only conceivable where the exercise of the given thematic aspects of communicative competence (for example,

¹⁰Philosophical Investigations, translated by G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958).

making and understanding a request) is embedded in the un-problematized background of the speaker's and auditor's knowledge of meaning. This comparison to rule following in Wittgenstein, though, is resisted by Habermas to the extent that language use mastery is not subsumable under propositional rules; Habermas wants to both maintain the practical dimensions of use and to recognize through formal pragmatic reconstruction how such use is rational. This tension in his writing seems only incompletely resolved. His postulate remains useful, though, to the extent that he articulates the depth of the regulative and interpretive aspects of pragmatic meaning, but his analysis will have to be limited to these aspects, as his fuller account of meaning and understanding mislead the correct analysis of interpretive description we need.

The upshot of both these objections, then, is that (1) pragmatic meaning is too broad a concept, misleading the analysis we seek, and (2) accounts of meaning and understanding are left without independent criteria securing reasons why an utterance should be acceptable. His appeal to rule following, moreover, is limited by his own axiomatic position about use being a practical mastery and resistant to propositional rule deduction.

I argue that we can more profitably approach this issue of how we mean by isolating those semantic factors which propositions express in speech—conventional meanings of terms in an uttered sentence—and likewise isolating how such

meaningful terms are used with pragmatic force in speech—how they accrue utterance meaning and speaker meaning. I suggest that we need to resist overlooking, in the pragmatic expansion, how distinct meaning issues are resolved. This indeed resonates with my earlier point that Habermas' argument doesn't compete with truth semantics outright. So, by analyzing meaning in pragmatic contexts as parasitic on conventional meaning, but deriving force through how the meaningful sentence is used, we relieve pragmatic meaning of the stress it accumulates in Habermas' account, and can further show how other utterance features sustain the linguistic and epistemic relations making interpretation possible.

Even if we make this sort of move, we can preserve Habermas' general picture; but we need to pursue it further by tying use issues to public norms and conventions, and thus relieve pragmatic meaning so that it may retain its connection with conventional and utterance meaning. Interpretation may then retain its prescriptive dimension. This sort of remedy may be pursued along the following lines: speech acts have a public dimension in their norms of use, while understanding has both a conventional dimension in recognizing how norms are followed and a social dimension in recognizing how social roles entitle speakers to follow which norms in which ways. More on this in section 5.4. I'd like to emphasize here, though, (1) that pragmatic meaning be drained of its oversaturation with warrant, and (2) that interpretation be seen as conventional in some important sense.

It may be objected to my proposed remedy that Habermas has already captured this conventional dimension in his account of a speaker's practical, empirical and normative knowledge. But this isn't clear, given that conventions have their relevance to speech acts in virtue not only of their being presupposed by participants in communication, but also—importantly—by their role in supporting inferences in conversation. One can utter *p* in a speech act effectively precisely because uttering *p* in that situation exploits a given convention of language use, and the effective use might be due to an inferred or implied uptake by an auditor. If Habermas intends conventional and inferential knowledge to form part of his general contextual knowledge, he has built it in in an awkward way, given his (late Wittgensteinian) insistence that, in the last analysis, language use is not rule governed the way propositional knowledge is, but is a blind competence which can at best be reconstructed, not deduced.

By recognizing norms of use in how speakers communicate, as I here argue, Habermas can then secure the conditions for successful and appropriate interpretations—preserving the prescriptive aspects of language use—without advocating strong acceptability. This argument may be linked to the analysis of social fact, in that social knowledge of such facts can be construed as partly conventional. In this way they can support conversational inferences, thus figuring in interpretations. However, since they are distinct from conventional facts about meaning, they require a practical mas-

tery in how they are accessed and how they are used. Moreover, their role in language use can be seen as distinct from both utterance meaning and conventional meaning of the sentence uttered.

Let me now bridge these discussions to my concluding analysis of social facts and inference. From my discussions of Crummell and Locke, it may be seen that whether and how speakers have been socialized to access, recognize and exploit common norms of language use figures in the sorts of social facts relevant in interpretation; that socialization is (in part) a function of the social and political context of a given vernacular speech community. From my discussion of Habermas, it may be seen that whether and how speakers can take up role/attitudes which enable them to recognize (in communicative uptake) and exploit (in speech act performances) conditions for the acceptability of utterances, figures in the sorts of social facts relevant in interpretation.

Social facts, then, are of two broad types: (1) social role and its relation to public norms of language use, and (2) social role and its relation to conditions of acceptability. Let me now turn to these facts more directly, relating them to inference and interpretation.

5.4 / SOCIAL FACTS AND INFERENCE

Let me now show how social knowledge, as I've been discussing it thus far, may be analyzed in terms of facts and inferences. In this section I show, in more precise and for-

mal terms, just how the sociolinguistic insights into social knowledge and the analyses of Crummell and Locke on the communicative and regulative dimensions of language use may be usefully fleshed out in terms of more formal aspects of conversation. These formalizations have both reconstructive and comparative value: they reconstruct the historical accounts with the explicit intention of facilitating their fruitful comparison with other theoretical accounts. In this way Crummell and Locke can be mainstreamed into current debates even as they are addressed on their own terms.

Inferences go on, certainly, and bear on interpretation through the conventional aspects of communicative uptake.¹¹ The form of this sort of inference may be formalized as follows:

5.4.1 speaker **A** utters **p** in speech act **S** to auditor **B** who uptakes **q**.

This formulation emphasizes that **q** is uptaken in virtue of **p**, but it brings the auditor squarely into that act: it matters that this particular **A** is speaking with this particular **B**. Statements of social fact enter the inference by describing the relation speaker **A** has with a commonly accepted and established norm of use within a given speech community:

5.4.2 fact **F₁** states that **A** stands in relation **RA** to norm **N₁**;

¹¹My concerns here might remind the reader of Grice's analysis of conversational implicatures. However, I don't explore his account here. See Grice's "Logic and Conversation," in his Studies in the Way of Words (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

5.4.3 fact E_2 states that B stands in R_B to N_2 .

Note that speakers and auditors each stand in some relation to norms in question. This accords with the basic presumption that communicative participants—speakers and auditors—each actively participate in performing meaningful speech acts and enabling interpretations. Note further that, in accord with this view, statements of social fact like E_1 and E_2 may be given (as E_n) for any number n participants.

In addition to highlighting a social dimension, (5.4.2) and (5.4.3) make explicit the other conventional aspect of interpretation. Given the inference of (5.4.1), that it matters that q is uptaken by some given auditor, the conventional relations to norms by speaker and auditor are presented as part of statements of social fact. These statements also introduce community norms of use into the interpretive inference; Crummell's account resonates nicely here.

Concerning the norms in question, I introduce the following formal expression:

5.4.4 norm N_1 holds that, to utter q in S , A must meet social criteria $C_1 \dots C_n$.

These criteria vary according to how a given speech community has established its entitlement conditions; as both Habermas and Locke show, these may vary according to contingent features of a community's history of use and patterns of interpretation. However, we resist Habermas' move toward strong acceptability, showing instead how the contingencies of ac-

ceptability conditions merely contribute to interpretive inference.

The following norm shows the link between interpretation and entitlement very clearly:

5.4.5 norm N_2 holds that B , when meeting $C'1 \dots C'n$, may communicatively uptake q when p is uttered in S when A meets $C1 \dots Cn$.

This move may be seen as plausible given my larger argument that entitlements participate in setting up frames of possible interpretation. Social criteria contribute to interpretation by narrowing what possible qs may be uptaken by B in A 's uttering p .

This part of the analysis may be related back to Locke's argument in the following way. Note that speaker A knows E_1 and E_2 , as does auditor B . These A/E_n and B/E_n relations may be shown to be what Locke's cognitive analysis addresses: knowing a fact about a relation to a norm constraining a role. Accordingly, shared knowledge can be seen as serving in Locke's analysis as the cognitive basis for communicative processes which support valuational experience. Again, I believe my formal analysis retains what Locke intends to capture in his account, but moves beyond it to account for how interpretation depends on inference informed by statements of social fact.

A second order of inferences above those already mentioned in (5.4.1) are inferences among norms and relations to entitlements:

5.4.7 inferences from N_n and E_A to what A is entitled to say—thereby constraining the range of possible qs for A given p .

In this way, communicative rationality in utterance interpretation includes those constraint relationships which those norms introduce, given the speech community's history of use. These inferences constitute the distinctively rule governed dimension of social knowledge in interpretation.

My analysis can now easily be enlisted to support interpretations, given uptaken qs for uttered ps . Those interpretations however, as should be clear, remain context sensitive given the contingencies of community conventions, institutional histories of communicative participants, and common patterns of use (wide statements of social fact), as well as speaker/auditor intimate history, idiosyncratic usages, and features of the participants's personal relationship (local statements of social fact).

Let me conclude the dissertation in chapter six with some suggestions as to how my results can benefit wider scholarship, with respect to both empirical and theoretical work on vernacular speech communities.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

I wrote this dissertation for several audiences at once; to the extent that it is interesting and perhaps even relevant is in no small part a consequence of this editorial fact. Its primary audience consists both of philosophers interested in language theory as well as philosophers concerned with the African American philosophical tradition. I believe chapters two through five speak strongly to these two overlapping audiences. I'd like to now provide some closure for the essay by returning explicitly to concerns of mine (first raised in chapter one) which overlap with the dissertation's third target audience, that of philosophically minded sociolinguists. Let me briefly say how my analysis of social knowledge in interpretation (particularly in vernacular utterance cases) can contribute to empirical linguistic work. Then I will say how my results bear on current issues in philosophy.

6.1 / BENEFITS FOR SOCIOLINGUISTIC RESEARCH

The first contribution I see my work here making is to help model the communicative competences of members of vernacular speech communities. It is evident from my analysis how speakers manage, not only grammatical competences within the logic of communication, but also a wealth of social facts and conventional knowledge about how norms regulate usage. Moreover, given the more formal aspects of my analysis at the end of chapter five, these facts and relations to norms are seen as providing a rich substrate from which interpretations may be generated. These competences flesh out further the extent to which communicative participants cognitively manage language use, without identifying that use simply with logical and grammatical rules.

Importantly, sociolinguistic research benefits from these aspects of my study by designing inquiries into social inference rules as well as the construction and management of social knowledge by communicative participants. Empirical research can directly investigate the particular competences to manage such inferences as they are exemplified in actual speech communities, with an eye toward modeling speech communities along lines of social knowledge, both in its construction and its protection. Likewise, studies showing the ways that the command of social inferential rules contributes to successful performance—based on my research here—will significantly augment how the field understands speech communi-

ties. Just as Labov and others pioneered work on the African American speech community nearly three decades ago, basing their inquiries on grammatical competence theory and (then-nascent) social dialectology, so may enterprising work be pursued which seeks to model competences on social inferential capacities. In fact, work which continues that started by Labov and his colleagues can in this way proceed to map out how speakers both recognize as well as exploit a variety of norms, including all-important norms regulating such speech practices as signifying. By showing how these norms regulate within a context of social knowledge, the linguistic work can be carried out which just might vindicate the long standing contention by non-specialists on language that African American language use employs sophisticated gaming strategies with histories all their own.

The second contribution is made to how bidialectal speech act situations may be studied. If what's going on is simply the management of divergent grammars, we could presumably predict how fires (and misfires) might go with great efficiency and success. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that the range of these communicative (and miscommunicative) events is quite extensive and often wildly unpredictable. My analysis indicates that these events have a social epistemological dimension. If that is so, then educational issues (for instance) might be handled more profitably when this factor is taken into account.

The deeper programmatic insight I intend to motivate in all of this, though, is the view that rule governed speech acts in vernacular contexts can be seen as rule governed in a way which doesn't compete with their social epistemological dimensions. They may be seen, that is, as exhibiting a rule following competence—and thereby supporting the communicative rationality of participants—without that competence consisting merely of grammatical knowledge. As I point out in section 1.2, to the extent that dialect is rule governed and norm conforming, the specifically cognitive dimensions of language use attest to the communicative competence of speakers of a dialect; this allows theorists of language to tie competence to dialect-specific (local) capabilities, rather than remaining simply at the (global) level of natural language use. This sort of move has the interesting consequence that Habermasian approaches to speech acts—fleshed out in the directions I indicated in sections 5.2 and 5.3 on acceptability conditions—would gain important conceptual relations to a field of study in which they have yet to be significantly recognized.

6.2 / BENEFITS FOR RESEARCH ON CURRENT ISSUES IN PHILOSOPHY

My study shows a way that social facts enter inference. Based on this, philosophers can further clarify the nature of social inference in linguistic communication, perhaps as part of a general theory of context and communication. Philosophers concerned with cognitive science benefit from the anal-

ysis of social knowledge and inference, given the logical and conceptual connections now made explicit among inference, information and fact, and social role.

Of course, a direct benefit is gained by philosophers writing in social theory. If social knowledge contributes in the ways I indicate to closing interpretive gaps in communication, then language use becomes important in social action, not simply for coordinating that action, but for introducing statements of social facts to how agents undertake such actions. In this way, agent motivation and intention shapes action in accord with that agent's reflexive knowledge about roles. A curious and fruitful development follows here, that attention to validity claims in speech acts provides a link between theory of social action and of agency, as well as language theory; while these links have certainly been explored at length before my study, what is evident following my work is that the links can promisingly be pursued along lines of social inferential knowledge.

A main insight my work generates for current issues in philosophy turns on my showing how contingent knowledge drives the relation between speaker meaning and the speech communities speakers belong to. The question of implicatures in conversation, explored by Grice, can be raised in terms of my analysis of social inference. If social inferences require, as I indicate, that the social roles of speaker and auditor both determine the content of what is inferred in a speech act, then implicatures need to be addressed within a

wider theory of communication. Of course, Griceans recognize this; happily, some outlines of that program are now indicated by my study.

6.3 / BENEFITS FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN PHILOSOPHY AND THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY

Another distinct benefit from my study is more purely scholarly, showing how work on the history of the theory of language can treat figures in the African American tradition which have heretofore been overlooked in such pursuits. Conversely, work on the African American tradition can be expanded and complemented by the focus I bring on issues in the theory of language.

An issue pursued in African American philosophy is that of modernity and postmodernity with respect to cultural resources: communicative knowledge is contingent all the way down, preempting possibilities for consensus-based collective projects, say postmodernists, while modernists maintain that future-directed anticipatory programs are both coherent and pursuable. My contribution to this debate consists in my showing how anti-foundationalism about communicative social knowledge doesn't imply that we abandon appeals to rule governed inference. Those appeals, moreover, can be fleshed out in even a strong cognitivist direction unproblematically.

This benefit also impacts the growing scholarship on Locke and Crummell. By showing how Locke resolves tensions between realism and anti-realism, I show how other areas of

his thought are to be addressed. Specifically, his cultural theory can be seen as growing from communication theoretic issues, which themselves turn on ontological and semantic premises. My work shows how this is to be done. Crummell scholarship, likewise, can be oriented along lines of his pragmatic arguments which I show to support his racial and ontological arguments. This can redirect the emphasis many have taken with Crummell away from purely cultural issues and toward semantic and pragmatic issues, as well as issues in the philosophy of mind. Again, I show this.

I trust that these insights and contentions, to the extent that they follow from the arguments of the preceding chapters, provoke philosophically sound study of vernacular speech. I further trust that the figures I discuss here, namely Locke and Crummell, will enjoy renewed attention by philosophers, particularly those interested in language. Finally, I trust that the edge I put on to (or take off of, depending on one's orientation) issues in language theory provides a clearer sense of how philosophy might effectively contribute to larger issues within debates on meaning and knowledge.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abrahams, R. D. Deep Down in the Jungle: Negro Narrative Folklore from the Streets of Philadelphia. Hatboro, PA: Pennsylvania Folklore Associates, 1964.
- Agar, M. "Cognition and Events." Sociocultural Dimensions of Language Use. Edited by M. Sanchez & B. Blount. New York: Academic Press, 1975.
- Appiah, K. A. In My Father's House: Africa and the Philosophy of Culture. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- Austin, J. L. How To Do Things With Words. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1955.
- Avramides, A. Meaning and Mind: An Examination of a Gricean Account of Language. Cambridge, MA: Bradford Books of the MIT Press, 1989.
- Bernstein, B. "Language and Roles." Language Acquisition: Models and Methods. Edited by R. Huxley & E. Ingram. London: Academic Press, 1971.
- Burling, R. English in Black and White. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973.
- Chomsky, N. Aspects of a Theory of Syntax. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1965.
- Crummell, A. The Future of Africa. New York: Scribner, 1862.
- _____. Africa and America. Miami, FL: Mnemosyne, 1969.
- _____. Destiny and Race: Selected Writings, 1840-1898. Edited by W. J. Moses. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992.
- Davidson, D. Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation. Oxford: Clarendon Press of Oxford University Press, 1984.

- Dillard, J. L. Black English: Its History and Usage in the United States. New York: Vintage Books of Random House, 1972.
- Dore, J. "The Development of Conversational Competence." Language Competence: Assessment and Intervention. Edited by R. L. Schiefelbusch. Boston: Little, Brown & Co, 1986.
- Douglass, F. Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass. The Classic Slave Narratives. Edited by H. L. Gates. New York: Mentor Books of Penguin, 1987.
- Dummett, M. "What is a Theory of Meaning?" Mind and Language: Wolfson College Lectures 1974. Edited by S. D. Guttenplan. Oxford: Clarendon Press of Oxford University Press, 1975.
- _____. "What is a Theory of Meaning? (II)"
- _____. Truth and Other Enigmas. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978.
- Epps, A., Huggins, N. I., Cruse, H., Murray, A., & Ellison, R. "The Alain Locke Symposium." Harvard Advocate (1973), pp. 9-29.
- Fodor, J. A. Psychosemantics: The Problem of Meaning in the Philosophy of Mind. Cambridge, MA: Bradford Books of the MIT Press, 1987.
- Gates, H. L. The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- Gordon, D. & Lakoff, G. "Conversational Postulates." Syntax and Semantics, vol. III. Edited by P. Cole & J. Morgan. New York: Academic Press, 1973.
- Grice, H. P. Studies in the Way of Words. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989.
- Gumperz, J. J. "Sociocultural Knowledge in Conversational Inference." Georgetown University Round Table on Languages and Linguistics. Edited by M. Saville-Troike. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1977.
- Habermas, J. "What is Universal Pragmatics?" Communication and the Evolution of Society. Translated by T. McCarthy. Boston: Beacon Press, 1979.
- _____. The Theory of Communicative Action: Reason and the Rationalization of Society, vol. I. Translated by T. McCarthy. Boston: Beacon, 1984.

- _____. The Theory of Communicative Action: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason, vol. II. Translated by T. McCarthy. Boston: Beacon, 1987.
- _____. Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays. Translated by W. M. Hohengarten. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1992.
- Halliday, M. A. K. "Language Structure and Language Function." New Horizons in Linguistics. Edited by J. Lyons. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1970.
- _____. Language as Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning. Edward Arnold, 1978.
- _____ & Hasan, R. Cohesion in English. London: Longman, 1976.
- Hannerz, U. Soulside: Inquiries into Ghetto Culture and Community. New York: Columbia University Press, 1969.
- Harris, J. Hermes, or a Philosophical Inquiry Concerning Language and Universal Grammar, 1751.
- Harris, L. "Identity: Alain Locke's Atavism." Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society, XXIV (1988), pp. 65-73.
- _____, ed. "Editor's Introduction." The Philosophy of Alain Locke: Harlem Renaissance and Beyond. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989.
- Helbling, M. "Alain Locke: Ambivalence and Hope." Phylon, XL (1979), pp. 291-300.
- Herder, J. G. New German Literature: Fragments, 1767.
- Humboldt, W. v. Humanist Without Portfolio: An Anthology. Translated by M. Cowan. Detroit, 1963.
- Hume, D. "Of National Character." Three Essays. London, 1748.
- _____. An Inquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals. New York: MacMillan, 1957.
- Hymes, D. Language in Culture and Society. New York, 1964.
- _____. "Competence and Performance in Linguistic Theory." Language Acquisition: Models and Methods. Edited by R. Huxley & E. Ingram. London: Academic Press, 1971.

- _____. "On Communicative Competence." Sociolinguistics. Edited by J. B. Pride & J. Holmes. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1972a.
- _____. "Models of the Interactions of Language and Social Life." Directions in Sociolinguistics. Edited by J. J. Gumperz & D. Hymes. New York, 1972b.
- Kallen, H. M. "Alain Locke and Cultural Pluralism." Journal of Philosophy, LIV (1957a), pp. 119-127.
- _____. "Alain Locke—Philosopher, Critic, Spokesman." Journal of Philosophy, LIV (1957b), pp. 113-118.
- Katz, J. J. Propositional Structure and Illocutionary Force: A Study of the Contribution of Sentence Meaning to Speech Acts. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977.
- Kemmerling, A. "Utterer's Meaning Revisited." Philosophical Grounds of Rationality: Intentions, Categories, Ends. Edited by R. E. Grandy & R. Warner. Oxford: Clarendon Press of Oxford University Press, 1986.
- Kochman, T., ed. Language and Expressive Behavior in the Black Inner City. Champaign, IL, 1970.
- _____. Rappin' and Stylin' Out: Communication in Urban Black America. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1972.
- _____. Black and White Styles in Conflict. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.
- Labov, W. Language in the Inner City: Studies in the Black English Vernacular. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972a.
- _____. "Rules for Ritual Insults." Rappin' and Stylin' Out: Communication in Urban Black America. Edited by T. Kochman. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1972b.
- Levinson, S. C. Pragmatics. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- Lewis, D. Philosophical Papers, vol. II. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983.
- Linneman, R. J., ed. Alain Locke: Reflections on a Modern Renaissance Man. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1982.

- Locke, A. "The Concept of Race as Applied to Social Culture." Howard Review I (1924).
- _____. "The New Negro." Philosophy Born of Struggle: Anthology of Afro-American Philosophy from 1917. Edited by L. Harris. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt, 1983.
- _____. The Philosophy of Alain Locke: Harlem Renaissance and Beyond. Edited by L. Harris. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989.
- _____. Race Contacts and Interracial Relations: Lectures on the Theory and Practice of Race. Edited by J. C. Stewart. Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1992.
- Locke, J. An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, book III. Edited by P. H. Nidditch. New York: Clarendon Press of Oxford University Press, 1975.
- Martinich, A. P. Communication and Reference. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1984.
- _____. "Meaning and Intention: Black versus Grice," Dialectica XLIV (1990), pp. 79-98.
- Mason, E. D. "Alain Locke on Race and Race Relations." Phylon XL (1979), pp. 342-350.
- _____. "Deconstruction in the Philosophy of Alain Locke." Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society XXIV (1988), pp. 85-106.
- Mead, G. H. Mind, Self, and Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist. Edited by C. W. Morris. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962.
- Moses, W. J. Alexander Crummell: A Study of Civilization and Discontent. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Ogden, C. K. Bentham's Theory of Fictions. London, 1932.
- Oldfield, J. R. Alexander Crummell (1819-1898) and the Creation of an African-American Church in Liberia. Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen Press, 1990.
- Putnam, H. "The Meaning of 'Meaning.'" Mind, Language and Reality: Philosophical Papers, vol. II. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1975.
- Quine, W. v. O. Word and Object. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1960.

- Rigsby, G. U. Alexander Crummell: Pioneer in Nineteenth-Century Pan-African Thought. New York: Greenwood, 1987.
- Savignon, S. J. Communicative Competence: Theory and Classroom Practice. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1983.
- Schiefelbusch, R. L., ed. "Editor's Introduction." Language Competence: Assessment and Intervention. Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1986.
- Schiffer, S. R. Meaning. Oxford: Clarendon Press of Oxford University Press, 1972.
- _____. Remnants of Meaning. Cambridge, MA: Bradford Books of the MIT Press, 1987.
- Searle, J. Speech Acts. Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1969.
- _____. Expression and Meaning. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1979.
- Sperber, D. & Wilson, D. Relevance: Communication and Cognition. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986.
- Stewart, J. C. The Critical Temper of Alain Locke: A Selection of his Essays on Art and Culture. New York: Garland, 1983.
- Stewart, W. A. "Creole Languages in the Caribbean." Study of the Role of Second Languages in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Edited by F. A. Rice. Washington, DC, 1962.
- Stowe, H. B. Uncle Tom's Cabin. Boston, 1852.
- Suppes, P. "The Primacy of Utterer's Meaning." Philosophical Grounds of Rationality: Intentions, Categories, Ends. Edited by R. E. Grandy & R. Warner. Oxford: Clarendon Press of Oxford University Press, 1986.
- Van Valin, R. D. "Meaning and Interpretation." Journal of Pragmatics IV (1980).
- Washington, J. Alain Locke and Philosophy: A Quest for Cultural Pluralism. New York: Greenwood Press, 1986.
- _____. A Journey into the Philosophy of Alain Locke. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994.
- Wittgenstein, L. Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus. Translated by C. K. Ogden. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1922.

_____. Philosophical Investigations. Translated by
G. E. M. Anscombe. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958.