

October 27, 2020

Week 11 Presentation Notes

Plan for Week 11:

The ‘vocabulary’ vocabulary:

I. Two Species of Vocabulary: ADPs and Idioms

‘Vocabulary’ is ambiguous between autonomous discursive practices and local, partial, dependent vocabularies. We can call the latter ‘idioms’: the culinary idiom, the nautical idiom.... This dual usage need not be a bad thing. We might usefully think of a genus with two species.

Rorty uses the term ‘vocabulary’ as a genus that has two species that differ in important ways. To decide whether this assimilation is a good idea, or rather a confusion more likely to mislead than to help us, we have to look at the doctrines associated with each use.

These are:

- vocabularies as *whole languages*, what I call “autonomous discursive practices,” (ADPs) and pick out as language games one could play though one played no other, such as using English or German, and
- vocabularies as partial, dependent, local, or regional *language fragments*, such as culinary vocabulary, nautical vocabulary, geological or theological or logical vocabulary. I will call these *idioms*.

II. ADPs

These are autonomous discursive practices (ADPs), in the sense of language-games one could play though one played no other.

MIE is an attempt to specify necessary and sufficient conditions for being an ADP, in the sense of a *minimal* ADP (cf. the project of “vandalizing Neurath’s boat”).

- a) Declarativism as using declarativist criterion of semantic demarcation: Using a single semantic metavocabulary for all declaratives.
- b) Semantic minimalism or deflationism supports declarativism.
- c) Rorty, following Davidson, is committed to all *minimal* ADPs being intertranslatable. In this sense, there is only *one*, up to intertranslatability-in-principle.
 - Q: What to do about their local idioms, which need not be?
 - Geertz story.
 - Commitment: Can *expand* any minimal ADP to include any constellation of idioms.

III. Idioms:

- a) It is vocabularies in the sense of local, partial idioms that Rorty needs for his story about
- redescription (not the best term, OK only in deflated declarativist sense, but misleading even there),
 - self-transformation by redescription,
 - irony
- b) Earlier, I raised the question whether, having transcended Carnap's language/theory distinction by going with post-Quinean (TDE) 'vocabularies', Rorty didn't sometimes backslide into merely Carnapian pragmatism about language-choice. "You are free to pick the language (meanings) you want, then the world will determine, relative to that language, what is true: it will 'pick' the theory.

Note **that the ADP/idiom distinction is recognizably a version of a language/theory distinction.**

That distinction is transformed (redescribed) along several dimensions, however: transposed into a pragmatist key.

Note further, that in this new form, it is *idioms*, not ADPs, that we are "free to choose" on Rorty's picture: the theory-analogues, not the language-analogues.

So Rorty's linguistic vocabulary-pragmatism is *not* Carnapian linguistic pragmatism.

In addition to ground-level idioms, there are **two theoretically important classes of idioms:**

- c) **Metavocabularies**. These are vocabularies for talking about vocabularies. There are two important classes of these (for our purposes):
- *Semantic* metavocabularies, that permit one to make explicit (put in sayable, propositional-conceptual form) the *conceptual contents* of expressions.
 - *Pragmatic* metavocabularies, that permit one to *say* (make explicit) what one must *do* (the abilities one must exercise, or the practices one must engage in) to count as using the target vocabulary so as to confer on its expressions the contents they actually have.

It is important to appreciate that these are *idioms*: local, partial, dependent vocabularies regions within some (non-minimal) ADP. They are not ADPs.

- d) ***Categorial* metavocabularies.**

These are *elaborated* from and *explicative* of (LX for) *every* ADP (in virtue of being LX for every *minimal* ADP). That is, they are *universally* LX.

Categorial vocabularies are local, partial vocabularies, not ADPs.

- i. They are *elaborated* from and *explicative* of (LX for) *every* autonomous discursive practice (ADP):
- ii. What can we say about a pragmatic metavocabulary that does not contain some particular categorial sub-vocabulary—say, logical vocabulary, or alethic modal vocabulary, or normative vocabulary? How is it expressively impoverished? What underwrites the thought that any such PM must be in some way ‘inadequate’?

IV. Price and Cambridge Pragmatism: Price on Sellars and McDowell, from Readings for this week

In the readings for this week we see, in Price’s treatment of Sellars and McDowell, and Blackburn’s treatment (in his Presidential address to the Aristotelian Society) of my *Between Saying and Doing* Oxford Locke lectures, contemporary Cambridge pragmatism’s treatment of and attitudes towards what Chauncey Maher groups together in his recent book as *The Pittsburgh School of Philosophy: Sellars, McDowell, and Brandom*.

I’ll focus on the Price essays (passages from which are excerpted in the Handout).

a) The most important thing to realize here is that:

- ***i-representation*** is a semantically deflationist theory addressed to **ADPs**, applied according to *declarativist criteria of semantic demarcation*.

It is *declarativist*, but not *descriptivist* (or representationalist), except in a characteristically deflated sense.

It is the conception of truth-evaluability, fact-stating, and proposition-expressing (so embeddable) that applies to all declarative sentences.

- ***e-representation*** applies to *some* local, partial, dependent vocabularies as **idioms**.

It is *descriptivist* or *representationalist* about those local idioms in a more robust sense. That more robust sense (about which more later) focuses on *tracking* relations, on *subjunctively robust* isomorphism (better: homomorphism)—Fodor’s “one-way counterfactual dependences.”

Price identifies e-representation with Sellars’s notion of the “dimension of *picturing*” of ordinary empirical descriptive (OED) vocabulary.

So Price’s distinction between e-representation and i-representation makes essential use of, and so depends on, the distinction of two species of Rortyan vocabulary: the ADPs in terms of which we understand declarativism, and local, partial, dependent idioms, *some* of which can be given a more robustly descriptivist-representationalist semantic treatment.

V. Price’s Path from *Time’s Arrow*

One lesson I would like everyone to take away from this class is to ask, about any philosophical question or issue:

- What *vocabulary* would a proper response be expressed in?
- And: what *privileges* that vocabulary in this context?
- Further: Is it a metavocabulary?
- And if so, what kind: semantic or pragmatic?
- If semantic, need it be representational?

Here are two examples where it is important to ask this question about the vocabulary presuppositions, when evaluating a philosophical claim:

i) Harman's Eliatic claim about moral values:

He asks what best explains our actual behavior, what we really do, when we apply terms from the moral-normative vocabulary, such as 'good', 'right', or 'ought'. He claims that in order to explain what we actually *do*, we need appeal only to normative *attitudes*, not to norms themselves.

But he is implicitly limiting the specification of what we actually do (or are disposed to do) to specifications in a *nonnormative* vocabulary: applying or not applying the term. But we also *actually, really* apply the terms *correctly*, or *incorrectly*. *That* is not evidently best explained by attitudes alone.

Perhaps there are reasons for the restriction he implicitly applies, on the vocabulary used to specify what we actually do. But he does not acknowledge that, or argue for the restriction. It remains implicit and out of sight.

ii) Kripkenstein:

He asks what it is about our *past* use of vocabulary (e.g., 'plus') that determines how we *ought* to use it in the future, how we have (thereby) *committed* ourselves to use it. And he claims that *nothing* about past use, actual or dispositional, determines how we *ought* to go on, how it would be *correct* to go on, how we have *committed* ourselves to go on in the future.

But he implicitly restricts the vocabulary in which we specify what we have *actually* done in the past to a *nonnormative* vocabulary. But using the term *correctly* on some past occasions, and *incorrectly* on others, is *also* something we have *actually* done.

Now, there might be issues about how to project those *past* oughts into *future* oughts. But they do *not* require us to get across an 'is'-'ought' gap. So, at a minimum, there are *two* issues here, which need to be separated. And, once again, Kripke does *not* acknowledge that he has implicitly imposed this restriction on the vocabulary for specifying past usage, and so does not *argue* that or give reasons for that restriction being imposed.

1. So I see 3 concerns here about the 'vocabulary' vocabulary:
 - i) Give necessary and sufficient conditions for being an ADP.

- ii) Specify a metavocabulary in which to give criteria of application and criteria of identity and individuation for partial, dependent vocabularies.
- iii) Specify criteria of adequacy that must be satisfied by adequate pragmatic metavocabularies: vocabularies that suffice to say what one must *do* in order thereby to be deploying an ADP.

The pragmatic metavocabularies in (iii) are local, dependent vocabularies, so vocabularies of kind (ii), that can specify the use of ADPs, which are vocabularies of kind (i),

2. Another try at a botanization:

- i) ADPs.
Declarativism.
Give necessary and sufficient conditions for being an ADP
- ii) Idioms.
 - a. Ordinary subject-matter idioms: defined by inferentially related clusters of lexical items.
 - b. Metavocabularies, divided into *semantic* and *pragmatic* species.
(Global) Descriptivism is declarativism plus using a *descriptive* semantic metavocabulary for all declaratives.
Ideal of pragmatic metavocabulary would be to have a theory T in it for each idiom, that one could Ramsify to specify functional-inferential roles.
 - c. Categorical idioms: LX for every ADP.

Plan:

Part I: The ‘vocabulary’ vocabulary:

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Rorty uses the term ‘vocabulary’ as a genus that has two species that differ in important ways. To decide whether this assimilation is a good idea, or rather a confusion more likely to mislead than to help us, we have to look at the doctrines associated with each use.

These are:

- vocabularies as *whole languages*, what I call “autonomous discursive practices,” (ADPs) and pick out as language games one could play though one played no other, such as using English or German, and
- vocabularies as partial, dependent, local, or regional *language fragments*, such as culinary vocabulary, nautical vocabulary, geological or theological or logical vocabulary. I will call these *idioms*.

Here is an example where Rorty, arguably, runs the two together:

In *CIS* he says:

“The ironist spends her time worrying about the possibility that she has been initiated into the wrong tribe, taught to play the wrong language game. She worries that the process of socialization which turned her into a human being by giving her a language may have given her the wrong language, and so turned her into the wrong kind of human being.”

It was coming into an ADP that was the “process of socialization” (*Bildung*). But this cannot be worrying about the wrong ADP. It is worrying about having been offered the wrong *idiom* in which to describe herself, or to use in interpreting herself. For in an important sense, all ADPs are alike for Rorty. This is the lesson he draws from Davidson’s “On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme,” and radicalizes in “The World Well Lost.”

Here one challenge is that Rorty’s use is ambiguous between, or at least includes the two potentially very different cases of ADPs, which are total, and local, dependent, regional vocabularies. Various things Rorty wants to say require a generic term that includes both, and some things he says are true only of one or the other. Thus: poets don’t introduce new ADPs. But the “vocabulary-relativity” of various features that have been associated with the “objective world” is typically *not* relativity to an ADP: to English as opposed to German, for instance.

For such ADP-relativity would seem to entail that different ADPs would yield different relativities. That is the “relativity to conceptual scheme” that depends on the scheme/content distinction (“dualism”?) that Davidson objects to in “On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme” as the “third dogma of empiricism,” an idea that Rorty applauds and amplifies in “The World Well Lost.”

And that point is different from the idea of post-Sellarsian Kantian categorial expressivism, which need not be committed to the Hegelian idea that different historical eras can be individuated by the different *categorial* concepts that are implicit in and structure their practices. For categorial vocabularies are idioms: partial, local vocabularies, not ADPs.

What Rorty is after when he denies that there is a vocabulary-independent standard of *goodness of representation*, call it “representational accuracy” that is such that, say, the vocabulary of fundamental physics could be seen to maximize such accuracy, he is denying the idea that representation provides a vocabulary-transcendent normative standard for assessing vocabularies, a way of standing outside and assessing all possible vocabularies. And it is *idioms*, partial, local vocabularies that are at issue here: vocabularies such as that of the natural sciences.

II. ADPs

These are autonomous discursive practices (ADPs), in the sense of language-games one could play though one played no other.

MIE is an attempt to specify necessary and sufficient conditions for being an ADP, in the sense of a *minimal* ADP (cf. the project of “vandalizing Neurath’s boat”).

- d) Declarativism as using declarativist criterion of semantic demarcation: Using a single semantic metavocabulary for all declaratives.
- e) Semantic minimalism or deflationism supports declarativism.
- f) Rorty, following Davidson, is committed to all *minimal* ADPs being intertranslatable. In this sense, there is only *one*, up to intertranslatability-in-principle.
 - Q: What to do about their local idioms, which need not be?
 - Geertz story.
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- a) We can think of *declarativism* as a semantic doctrine, more general than *representationalism* or *descriptivism*, which presuppose it. It is the view that whatever can be expressed by declarative sentences should be given the *same* semantic treatment, should be understood to be contentful (perhaps *conceptually* contentful) in the *same* sense. We should understand all declarative sentences as expressing *propositions*, in a univocal sense of ‘proposition.’ Here *TLP* is important because it breaks with declarativism for the special case of declarative sentences formed by the use of *logical* vocabulary. It is representationalist about the *all* the rest.

But we need not just think of the *doctrine*. We can use a *declarativist criterion of demarcation* of the discursive. Then we can ask what all discursive practices have in common *pragmatically* and *semantically*, if *syntactically* they can be extensionally discriminated by a *declarativist criterion of demarcation*.

ADP: every language-game one could play though one played no other, every set of *discursive* practices a community could engage in though it engaged in no other *discursive* practices. To count as *discursive* practices, I argue that they must be intelligible as practices of giving and challenging *reasons*. Equivalently, I claim, they must confer on some performances the significance of *assertions*, claimings. Assertibles or claimables are what can both serve as and stand in need of reasons, what can be the premises and conclusions of inferences, and can be incompatible with each other. Those are *propositional* conceptual contents. Whatever locutions express them will be *declarative sentences*.

Cf. the “iron triangle of discursiveness: on the side of pragmatics, asserting, on the side of semantics, propositional contents, on the side of syntax, declarative sentences.

Propositional contents in this sense will be “truth-evaluable” (in a deflationary sense), and embeddable as components of more complex sentences.

Remaining at this level of semantic analysis is *declarativism*.

- b) But a different story will then need to be told about vocabularies in the sense of idioms than we tell about vocabularies in the sense of ADPs. We need some way of specifying the distinctive sorts of criteria of application and criteria of identity and individuation of vocabularies that articulate the sortal “vocabulary-as-idiom.”

On introducing a sortal for ‘vocabulary’:

Such a sortal must make it possible to identify and individuate vocabularies.

That is, it must have i) criteria of (correct) application (and consequences of application, though these might be derived from the circumstances, given a surrounding theory), and ii) criteria of identity and individuation.

In *MIE*, I offer necessary and sufficient conditions for being an ADP. (And we can ask: what are the rival philosophical answers to *this* question? The early LW has one. The later LW rejects as mistaken any theory that implies there *is* an answer. (That is part of what rejecting the idea that “language has a downtown” involves.). But does Quine have an answer? Does Dummett? What about other contemporary philosophers of language? Davidson does have an answer: it is interpretability, in the sense of being mappable onto our practice, in a way that permits fluid conversation. In *MIE*, I take for granted the Davidsonian answer as extensionally correct, and so setting criteria of adequacy for a systematic theoretical response, which interpretability is not. Davidson’s own *theoretical* answer is in terms of a recursive truth-theory. I accept that as at least responsive. But does, say, Tim Williamson have a candidate response to this challenge? Here describe the large, quasi-empirical claim that *MIE* implicitly makes: That any practice that satisfies the theoretical conditions for being an ADP (pragmatically and, so, semantically), will be interpretable in Davidson’s sense.

But an answer to this question—what are vocabularies in the sense of ADPs?—while it tells us in an important sense what *facts* are, does not tell us how to individuate *kinds* of facts, in the sense in which *kinds* of facts (physical, culinary, nautical, theological...) correspond to local, regional, partial, dependent vocabularies. And when we talk about “*all* the facts,” to ask whether “all the facts are natural or physical facts,” for instance, we are quantifying over “vocabularies” in a sense that includes these local, partial, regional, dependent vocabularies, too.

For the subject naturalist, an important fact is that the language of physics, or even of the natural sciences altogether, is not an ADP. It is not a language one could use though one used no other. This claim is important, and requires a substantial argument.

(Or do I want the different-but-related question of whether the subject-naturalist could use the language of physics, or of the natural sciences generally, to say what we are doing when we

deploy an ADP? That is, to be a language of subject-naturalism. [Next week we will read some of Price's efforts to say what, e.g. assertion, or negation is.]

It seems that there are two questions in the vicinity:

a) Is the language of physics (natural sciences) an ADP?

b) Is the language of physics (natural sciences) sufficient to specify what we are doing when we deploy an ADP?

It is, I think, the former, (a) that Sellars addresses in PSIM. For there he is asking about the manifest image, which is an ADP, and about the local, regional, (etc.) vocabulary of physics.

But on my way of picking out ADPs theoretically in *MIE*, (b) would require being able to identify assertions, inferences, substitutional inferences, and anaphoric inheritance of substitution-inferential role, on the side of semantics, and normative notions of commitment, entitlement, attribution, and undertaking on the side of pragmatics.

Even the Davidsonian interpretivist criterion of discursiveness of an ADP requires concepts picking out *our* discursive practices and of "fluidity of conversation" or "making sense to us", the "ability to carry on a conversation" that we must implicitly be able to deploy to engage in an ADP, but which are *not* evidently part of the language of physics.

Q: Did Carnap think one could use a syntactically perspicuous regimented vocabulary as an ADP? Or did he think that his ideal language of science was a special-purpose instrument, and would have to be used against the background of some messy natural-language ADP? Carnapian pragmatism (a view he does not embrace until the mid '40s, in ["Empiricism and Ontology...?" Huw quotes him.]) suggests the latter. Sellars seems to think Carnap at least implicitly raises the point, even though Carnap is not mentioned in PSIM.

What is the relation between issues (a) and (b) above, between asking whether some apparently local, dependent vocabulary is an ADP and asking whether it is adequate to specify ADPs in the way subject-naturalists want and need. The latter question, (b), is whether some index partial vocabulary can serve as an adequate pragmatic metavocabulary for ADPs.

We can also ask whether, if some vocabulary can serve as an adequate *pragmatic* metavocabulary for ADPs, it can also serve as, or if we can derive from it, an adequate *semantic* metavocabulary.

So the question is whether any specialized local vocabulary can serve as an adequate i) pragmatic metavocabulary and ii) semantic metavocabulary for ADPs generally.

That is a question that arises for post-Sellarsian Kantian categorial expressivism.

MIE claims to offer just such a specialized vocabulary.

The later Wittgenstein argues, on principled grounds connected to his view of the essential plasticity and self-overflowing character of discursive practices as such, that there can be no such specialized vocabulary. The idea that there could be is something like *the* philosophical illusion.

A positive thesis in the vicinity that he *might* endorse is that: Only an ADP can serve as an adequate pragmatic metavocabulary for vocabularies generally.

So this is a central issue for the idea of metavocabulary generally.

III. Idioms:

- e) It is vocabularies in the sense of local, partial idioms that Rorty needs for his story about
- redescription (not the best term, OK only in deflated declarativist sense, but misleading even there),
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Rorty on Vocabularies and Redescription, and Irony

Vocabularies and Redescription:

Rorty's concepts of vocabulary and of the activity of redescription go hand in hand.

Redescription is changing one's vocabulary.

He is interested in the *transformative* power of redescription, of changing vocabularies.

Rorty wants to redescribe various important conceptual advances in terms of 'redescription.'

What is changed is 'vocabularies' in the sense of *idioms*: partial, dependent vocabularies. He is not talking about switching from English to German.

'Redescription' is not ideal as a technical term for such vocabulary shifts, because it presupposes that what vocabularies are *for* is describing things. That is, it has a *descriptivist* semantic-pragmatic presupposition. Rorty emphatically wants to follow Sellars and LW in denying *that* unifunctional Procrustean commitment. But for rhetorical purposes, the term has some benefits. He reads Hegel as having redescribed various sorts of conceptual progress as the result of redescription.

He is poetic about the possibilities of self-transformation provided by the possibility of redescribing oneself, by adopting a new idiom. Strong poets (in Bloom's sense) give us idioms to do that: Milton, Blake, Wordsworth, Shelley, or Eliot.

He thinks novels give us idioms to redescribe ourselves, and thereby to transform ourselves.

Galileo, Descartes, and Newton did, too. It turns out that *mathematical* redescription of the movements of bodies is transformative of our capacity to predict and control them. And coming to terms with the use of that same vocabulary to redescribe *us* gave us distinctively modern philosophy.

In mathematics, Descartes redescribed geometrical facts in an algebraic idiom, and that redescription was transformative. 19th century mathematicians redescribed what they were doing as no longer kinds of *calculation*, but as kinds of *conceptualization*. Indeed, contemporary mathematics is something like the science of redescription. (That's what they mean by what they call "representation theorems.")

This notion of redescription is also of the first importance in understanding Rorty's concept of irony. In *CIS* he says:

The ironist spends her time worrying about the possibility that she has been initiated into the wrong tribe, taught to play the wrong language game. She worries that the process of socialization which turned her into a human being by giving her a language may have given her the wrong language, and so turned her into the wrong kind of human being.

This cannot be worrying about the wrong ADP. It is worrying about having been offered the wrong idiom in which to describe herself, or to use in interpreting herself.

1. Articulating the sortal “vocabulary as idiom”:

Must say something systematic about the criteria of application of the term ‘idiom’, and about the criteria of identity and individuation of them. That is what I’ve done for ADPs in *MIE*. What are the corresponding identifying and individuating features of vocabularies-as-idioms? Note that the crucial notion of *privileged vocabulary*, which Rorty uses to apply his social pragmatism about norms (‘privileges’, ‘authority’ ...) to *philosophical* idioms, specifically *representational* (descriptive) ones, concerns vocabularies-as-idioms, not ADPs.

- f) Earlier, I raised the question whether, having transcended Carnap’s language/theory distinction by going with post-Quinean (TDE) ‘vocabularies’, Rorty didn’t sometimes backslide into merely Carnapian pragmatism about language-choice. “You are free to pick the language (meanings) you want, then the world will determine, relative to that language, what is true: it will ‘pick’ the theory.

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That distinction is transformed (redescribed) along several dimensions, however: transposed into a pragmatist key.

Note further, that in this new form, it is *idioms*, not ADPs, that we are “free to choose” on Rorty’s picture: the theory-analogues, not the language-analogues.

So Rorty’s linguistic vocabulary-pragmatism is *not* Carnapian linguistic pragmatism.

- g) *Ground-level idioms* are identified and individuated:

Lexically, by an inferentially related cluster of terms or locutions:

culinary, nautical, meteorological, geological, theological...vocabularies.

By their expressive role:

Logical, modal, normative, anaphoric... vocabularies.

And no doubt in other ways, too.

Q: Better botanization of local idioms?

And I have not yet addressed the question, necessary to deploy the Rortyan concept of vocabulary, of how to specify criteria of application, and of identity and individuation, not just for vocabularies in the sense of ADPs (for which the Wittgensteinian question above arises), but for local, partial, dependent vocabularies.

We might approach that question, to begin with, *lexically*: by looking to individuate culinary or nautical vocabularies by picking out sets of *words*.

But not just any random assembly of words will pick out a vocabulary in the requisite sense. ('prime', 'heavy', 'hot', 'English', 'hole', 'college', 'price', 'fright', 'quick',...).

We think instead of something like a topic: cooking, sea-faring, God....

This latter sense, centered around an activity or cluster of activities, or a cluster of inferentially related words does have the advantage of getting the *connections* between locutions into view, especially the inferential connections. But it is not going to get us Blake's vocabulary vs. Milton's, or what Rorty is after thinking of each strong poet (in Bloom's sense) as having a vocabulary.

Rorty's "vocabulary in use" and Wittgenstein's "Sprachspiel" are instruments for the same expressive job. When I object to LW's 'slab' Sprachspiel as being a *Sprachspiel* only in the sense of *vocal*, not *verbal*, I am objecting to it's not being an ADP, on the basis that nothing in it has the significance of an assertion (and so, of inference). But in a sense this is unfair. LW wants the partial, dependent sense of 'vocabulary'. What is wrong, or potentially misleading, is that he presents these Sprachspiele as autonomous practices, and as *language* games. Insofar as they are autonomous (and they are presented in a way intended to make it plausible that they are autonomous), I want to say, they are not *language* games.

2. On applying the 'vocabulary' vocabulary to local, partial, dependent constellations of discursive practices.

a) The first observation is what a motley these local, regional vocabularies are. In addition to those individuated by subject matter (culinary, nautical, theological, geological...) there are those individuated by grammatical structure (anaphoric vocabulary, sortals and predicates,...) or expressive function (logical vocabulary, emotive-expressive vocabulary,...) or speech acts ("How to do things with words"). Slurs. Political vocabulary. I've argued that categorial vocabularies, which are partial vocabularies (not ADPs) have unobvious but important features in common: logical, normative, modal, semantic, intentional....

c) Here the thought is that one would formulate a *theory* in the pragmatic metavocabulary (itself a local, partial vocabulary, not an ADP, as remarked above). This would be a set of sentences in the PM such that the truth of those sentences, regarding what one is *doing*, is sufficient to ensure that doing that is *saying* what one says by properly using the target partial vocabulary.

d) This is the task one is set if one is engaged in what used to be called "knowledge engineering" AI projects. One needs to specify, in some PM, what one needs to *do*, thereby to succeed in using the vocabulary *as* meaning what the target vocabulary means.

e) It is by no means obvious that this can be done: picking a suitable PM and then formulating in it a theory that gives at least sufficient conditions for properly deploying the target partial vocabulary.

Note: a 'modest' PM, in McDowell's sense, would use the target vocabulary in formulating such a theory. It would talk about "calling red things 'red'," for instance.

In addition to issues about the availability of a suitable pragmatic metavocabulary, there can be reasons for skepticism about the feasibility of formulating a *theory* in a suitable PM. (Cf. Mark Wilson’s complaints about “theory T” philosophy.)

f) This might be one of the roots of Wittgenstein’s semantic skepticism.

He offers, we might think, an implicit *theory of meaning*, in Dummett’s sense: an account of what meaning is. Insofar as he does offer one, it understands meaning in terms of *functional role* in practices of (properly) *using* the expressions (vocabulary) whose meaning is at issue.

What we are now investigating and interrogating is the possibility and feasibility of formulating specific Dummettian *meaning theories* in accord with that pragmatist-functionalist theory of meaning.

(In the notes for last time I talk about Dummett’s distinction between theories of meaning and meaning theories.). Meaning theories specify the meanings of some expressions. We are considering analogues of Dummettian meaning theories that specify the use of partial vocabularies.

- i. Those meaning theories would have to be expressed in (for LW) pragmatic metavocabularies.

I don’t think this is problematic in principle for LW.

α) What he would object to, I think, is the idea that we could settle, in advance, on *one* pragmatic metavocabulary, with any confidence that it would suffice to deal with arbitrary, contingent practical projection of our ground-level vocabularies into new surrounding regions.

β) And he would object to the categorial expressivist idea: that there would be some local, partial vocabularies that would be elements of any “adequate” (parameter warning!) pragmatic metavocabulary. And I think he would object to this in both directions: that the supposedly categorial metavocabulary would be applicable to any and every possible extension-projection of current ground-level practices, and that without it any pragmatic metavocabulary would be leaving something important about those practices unexpressed or inexpressible.

- ii. To be a meaning *theory*, we would need a “theory T” couched in that pragmatic metavocabulary: a set of sentences such that someone counts as *using* the base vocabulary in question *if and only if* the sentences of that pragmatic metavocabulary applied to them (were true of them).

I think Wittgenstein would say that we have *no* reason to think that there is a pragmatic metavocabulary that guarantees the existence of such a theory T.

- iii. Then, following out the Lewis and Canberra Planners projects, we would pick some privileged local, partial, regional vocabulary *within* the pragmatic metavocabulary, and hold that fixed, Ramsifying theory T w/res to it. That would give us a specification of *functional roles* of expressions.

This would be a way of operationalizing what Sellarsian dot-quoted expressions form *distributed singular term* (his “DST”) *sortals* for.

- iv. The result of this process would be a proper functionalist Wittgensteinian *meaning theory*, in accord with his *theory of meaning*.
- v. One could then ask, still in the Lewisian spirit of the Canberra Planners, of any items specified in some *different* (differently privileged, for instance, “naturalistic”) vocabulary, what were the *best realizers*, if any, of the roles specified in the Ramsified version of theory T. Note that to do that, it must be that the new vocabulary shares with pragmatic metavocabulary of theory T the portion (region), the partial, local vocabulary that was held fixed in theory T for the purposes of Ramsification. For Carnap and the young Sellars, this might be only *logical* vocabulary. For Lewis and the Canberra Planners, it might include only the vocabulary of “*causes*”, or whatever you take to express causation. For Fodor, possibly, “one-way counterfactual dependences.”

- g) The idea would be to use the apparatus of (f) above to specify partial, local vocabularies.
 - i. One could start by taking the whole ADP to be what needed to be characterized in a pragmatic metavocabulary in the form of a theory T of sentences, such that engaging in the ADP is just making true those sentences concerning what one is doing: acting so as to make theory T true of one’s activities or one’s community’s practices. [Big job!]
 - ii. One would then Ramsify, holding fixed *all* the vocabulary of the ADP *except* the partial, local vocabulary V that one wanted a meaning-theory for.

In addition to ground-level idioms, there are two theoretically important classes of idioms:

- h) **Metavocabularies**. These are vocabularies for talking about vocabularies. There are two important classes of these (for our purposes):
 - *Semantic* metavocabularies, that permit one to make explicit (put in sayable, propositional-conceptual form) the *conceptual contents* of expressions.
 - *Pragmatic* metavocabularies, that permit one to *say* (make explicit) what one must *do* (the abilities one must exercise, or the practices one must engage in) to count as using the target vocabulary so as to confer on its expressions the contents they actually have.

It is important to appreciate that these are *idioms*: local, partial, dependent vocabularies regions within some (non-minimal) ADP. They are not ADPs.

- i) ***Categorial* metavocabularies.**

These are *elaborated* from and *explicative* of (LX for) *every* ADP (in virtue of being LX for every *minimal* ADP). That is, they are *universally* LX.

Categorial vocabularies are local, partial vocabularies, not ADPs.

- i. They are *elaborated* from and *explicative* of (LX for) *every* autonomous discursive practice (ADP):
- ii. What can we say about a pragmatic metavocabulary that does not contain some particular categorial sub-vocabulary—say, logical vocabulary, or alethic modal vocabulary, or normative vocabulary? How is it expressively impoverished? What underwrites the thought that any such PM must be in some way ‘inadequate’?

Recap and redescription of post-Sellarsian Kantian categorial expressivism

1. Kant’s idea: In addition to concepts whose principal expressive task it is to make explicit (let us talk about), describe and explain, empirical goings-on (OED vocabulary), there are concepts whose principal expressive task it is to make explicit necessary features of the practical *framework* within which it is possible to describe and explain empirical goings-on. This “framework” consists of features of the discursive practices we must be able to engage in (put in a social register) or the abilities we must be able to exercise (put in an individual register) in order thereby to count as talking and thinking about how things empirically are.
2. Sellars’s redescription of Carnap as a neokantian with a metalinguistic conception of framework-explicating concepts. Sellars’s (shaky, inconstant) transposition of that idea to specifically *pragmatic* metavocabularies.
3. My generalization and systematization of Sellars’s idea:
 - a) The sense in which these concepts are “known *a priori*” (“*a priori*” is used exclusively adverbially by Kant): in knowing how to use OED vocabulary, one already knows how to do everything one needs to know how to do in order to use categorial concepts. But, as Sellars says, “Grasp of a concept is always mastery of the use of a word.” One might not have the words to assemble those implicit abilities around. Still, given the word, the abilities one already has can be *algorithmically elaborated* into the ability to use the new word.
Paradigm example: introducing conditionals to someone who can already (fallibly) distinguish materially good implications from materially bad ones.
Slogan: the ability to use categorial concepts (in a metavocabulary) is *elaborated from* the ability to use ground-level OED concepts.
 - b) The **expressive task** characteristic of these categorial concepts is to *make explicit* abilities necessary to use OED vocabulary. This is making it possible to *say* (explicitly) what one otherwise can only *do* (implicitly, e.g., distinguish good from bad implications, or discern material incompatibilities).

- c) So categorial concepts, expressed in a semantic or pragmatic metavocabulary, are both *elaborated from* and *explicative of* ground-level, noncategorial (OED) concepts. They are LX for those ground-level concepts.
 - d) We should distinguish, within vocabularies (specified in the Rortyan ‘vocabulary’-vocabulary) between *autonomous* or *total* vocabularies and *dependent* or *partial* vocabularies. Autonomous discursive practices (ADPs) are language games one could play though one played no other, discursive practices one would engage in though one engaged in no others.
 - e) Categorial concepts are LX for *every* ADP.
 - f) Claim: *logical* concepts are categorial in this sense.
 - g) Claim: *alethic modal* concepts are categorial in this sense.
No description without explanation—vs. mere labeling—no assertion without inference.
All at the level of assimilation of declarativism.
 - h) Claim: *deontic normative* concepts are categorial in this sense.
 - i) Claim: *Intentional* vocabulary (propositional attitude ascriptions) is categorial in this sense.
 - j) Claim: *semantic* vocabulary is categorial in this sense. ‘True’, ‘refers’, and the ‘of’ of regimented *de re* ascriptions of propositional attitude.
 - k) Q: What other kinds of concepts are arguably LX for every ADP?
4. This sort of reasoning is *transcendental* in Kant’s sense. It is looking for the conditions of any possible discursive practice (“empirical experience”).
- a) It asks: What must one be able to *do* in order to engage in any discursive practice at all (any ADP)? This is a question about features of *universal* pragmatic metavocabularies.
 - b) Then it asks, what locutions are LX for those abilities? How can the ability to use those vocabularies be *elaborated from* the underlying abilities to use ADPs? Whatever is, will be categorial: LX for *every* ADP.
 - c) These concepts will be available *a priori* to all discursive practitioners—in a specific sense of “*a priori*”: any participant in an ADP already knows how to do everything they need to know how to do to acquire the concept. Abilities they are guaranteed already to have (those without which they could not engage in ADPs) can be algorithmically elaborated into the ability to use the categorial concepts.
5. This sort of systematic, transcendental theorizing is anathema to the later Wittgenstein (but not the early!), and to the James-Dewey-Rorty wing of American pragmatism. It is *not* anathema to Price, as we will see. And it is one of the features that distinguishes the Peirce-Lewis-Sellars wing of American pragmatism from the James-Dewey-Rorty one. But this last point is *not* something Misak is aware of, or appeals to in distinguishing the two schools of pragmatism.

It is of the essence of this sort of *fox*-pragmatism to reject the *hedgehog* theorizing and systematizing of transcendental argument. To make this sort of transcendental move is to break decisively with Wittgenstein, Dewey, and Rorty. The systematic philosophical theorizing of Peirce, Lewis, Sellars, and me is exactly what their sort of pragmatism rejects and recoils from.

We might use pragmatist rhetoric, but in succumbing to the temptations of this sort of philosophical theorizing, we can be at best Pragmatists in Name Only (PINOs), or, as John McDowell has actually described me, Wittgensteinian in Name Only—making for the happy acronym **WINO**.

6. It is on the basis of this redescription of the difference between the two wings of American pragmatism that Misak properly and illuminatingly distinguishes, and of the assimilation of the James-Dewey-Rorty strand to Humean expressivism (epitomized by Blackburn), which Price has so usefully redescrbed them in terms of, that I want to distinguish *Kantian* expressivism from *Humean* expressivism.

7. And I further want to tempt Huw into joining me in wanting to synthesize *these* traditions of pragmatism-expressivism. Doing that would be pursuing *local* Humean functionalist expressivism about *partial, dependent* vocabularies under the theoretical umbrella of post-Sellarsian Kantian categorial expressivism about *total, autonomous* vocabularies. And the idea is that those *local, partial, dependent* vocabularies (modal, normative...) are to be seen to have something crucial in common: being LX for every ADP. In this regard, they are *not* like such partial, dependent vocabularies as *culinary, nautical, theological, or geological* vocabularies.

IV. Price and Cambridge Pragmatism:

In the readings for this week we see, in Price's treatment of Sellars and McDowell, and Blackburn's treatment (in his Presidential address to the Aristotelian Society) of my *Between Saying and Doing* Oxford Locke lectures, contemporary Cambridge pragmatism's treatment of and attitudes towards what Chauncey Maher groups together in his recent book as *The Pittsburgh School of Philosophy: Sellars, McDowell, and Brandom*.

I'll focus on the Price essays (passages from which are excerpted in the Handout).

b) The most important thing to realize here is that:

- ***i-representation*** is a semantically deflationist theory addressed to **ADPs**, applied according to *declarativist criteria of semantic demarcation*.

It is *declarativist*, but not *descriptivist* (or representationalist), except in a characteristically deflated sense.

It is the conception of truth-evaluability, fact-stating, and proposition-expressing (so embeddable) that applies to all declarative sentences.

- ***e-representation*** applies to *some* local, partial, dependent vocabularies as **idioms**.

It is *descriptivist* or *representationalist* about those local idioms in a more robust sense.

That more robust sense (about which more later) focuses on *tracking* relations, on *subjunctively robust* isomorphism (better: homomorphism)—Fodor's "one-way counterfactual dependences."

Price identifies e-representation with Sellars's notion of the "dimension of *picturing*" of ordinary empirical descriptive (OED) vocabulary.

So Price's distinction between e-representation and i-representation makes essential use of, and so depends on, the distinction of two species of Rortyan vocabulary: the ADPs in terms of which we understand declarativism, and local, partial, dependent idioms, *some* of which can be given a more robustly descriptivist-representationalist semantic treatment.

Price is together with Rorty and Sellars in rejecting global (declarativist) descriptivism-representationalism in any non-deflated sense. That is what he means by saying he used to be a *nihilist* about representationalism. But now he acknowledges a deflated declarativist sense, and a non-deflated sense that applies to *some* local idioms. That's what he means when he says that now he is a dualist about representation.

c) Price takes it that the semantic metavocabulary appropriate for e-representational analyses is a *naturalistic* semantic metavocabulary. Both ends of the tracking relation, what is represented and the representings of it are to be specified in a naturalistic vocabulary, and the relation between them is to be specified in the sort of alethic modal terms used to formulate subjunctively robust relations in the special sciences. For these particular (OED) idioms, the object-naturalist treatment is correct. E-representation is object-naturalism.

- d) Accordingly, Price sees two notions of fact and two notions of world, corresponding to the i-representational and the e-representational.
Look at the marked passages from his two essays.
- e) I am going to want to make two emendations to Price’s account of e-representation, to suggest a notion of description that is intermediate between the merely declarativist i-representational one and the object-naturalist e-representation one.
- i. In addition to the alethic modal condition I will call “*epistemic tracking*,” I will impose the condition of “normative semantic governance.”
 - ii. I will relax the requirement that the semantic metavocabulary used to specify representeds and representings and the two relations of epistemic tracking and normative semantic governance between them must be a *naturalistic* one.
- In this more relaxed (but still not declarativist) sense of ‘description’, even *categorial* idioms can be seen to have a descriptive dimension, *in virtue of*, but parasitic on, their primary categorial expressive role.

Part... Price on Sellars and McDowell, from Readings for this week

Facts and Worlds in the light of the distinction between i-representations and e-representations.

My emendation of Price on that distinction.

Project: Fill in Price’s notion of e-representation, thought of as encompassing what Sellars is after with picturing. It is to make sense of the “tracking” conception of representation, which is thought of as narrower than the declarativist conception.

(The discussion above is addressing the notion of i-representation, insofar as it is about picking out ADPs.)

I have suggested

a) understanding tracking in terms of subjunctively robust inferences, from, as it were, map-facts to terrain-facts. This is to make sense of the isomorphism intuition.

b) adding a “semantic governance” requirement (dimension). This is needed to get the normative dimension of representation that Kant cottoned on to into view. It will be needed to get the “direction of fit” properly in view.

Fodor aims for this with his “*one-way* counterfactual dependences.”

Q: What can I say he is missing, in trying to reconstruct this dimension in non-normative terms?

A: There can be all sorts of subjunctively robust tracking relations that are not *used as* representations, that do not have the (normative) *practical significance* of representations, that are not *understood as*, practically *taken* or *treated as* representations.

Regardless of what we use the word ‘representation’ for (this same issue comes up in information theory), we must distinguish these two cases.

Possible or candidate (e-)representations vs. actual (e-)representations, or

Representations vs. semantically significant representations.

Note that Derrida, in “Margins,” is playing with the question of what are, in effect, map-facts. That is, the question of how it is to be determined which vocabulary we should use to specify the analogue of map-facts for literary productions. (Here these are the features that should, must, or can legitimately be taken into account in *interpreting* the text in question.

For he wants to sort texts by the width of the margins, and (elsewhere, I think), make much of the fact that in French ‘Hegel’ is a homonym of ‘eagle’ (‘aigle’). I suppose one point he is making is to ask what metavocabulary we can use to specify the ‘map-facts’ on the side of some work of literature, once we are not restricted by the author’s intentions. Or not allowed to appeal to them, because exactly the same question arises for them as arises for the text produced in response to those intentions.

This is a question on the syntactic or semantic side, that can be laid alongside his dallying with the pragmatic issue of to whom various linguistic performances are “addressed”, in “Envois”, which Rorty discusses in *CIS*.

Price thinks that all declarative sentences are i-representational. So, everything that figures declaratively in any ADP will have i-representational properties. We can talk about the *truth* of such claimables, can embed them or compound them to form compound sentences in which they occur unasserted, contributing only to the i-representational content of the compound sentences, can be said to “state facts” when they are true.

This is what leads him to say that there are two kinds of *facts* that go with the two senses of ‘representation’: one available within a declarativist framework, and one specific to the subset of partial, dependent vocabularies, idioms, that e-represent.

I *think* that he wants to pick these idioms out as ones that e-represent in the sense of *tracking* (a matter of subjunctive dependence) states of affairs specifiable in a *naturalistic* vocabulary. That is, he is concerned to reconstruct the *object naturalist’s* picture, just not for vocabularies demarcated in the declarativist way.

Here are the passages from this week’s readings that address the issues of ‘fact’ and ‘world’ in the wake of the distinction between i-representation and e-representation:

that alongside the distinction between e-representational and i-representational notions in play in contemporary philosophy, we need to recognise a corresponding distinction between two notions of *world*. One notion (the ‘e-world’, as I called it) is the natural world, the object of study of science in a broad sense. The other notion (the ‘i-world’) is something like ‘all the facts’—everything we take to be the case. [WSMCP 137-138]

I have in mind the kind of metaphysical naturalism that maintains that the natural world is ‘all there is’ (i.e., that declares itself to be ‘realist’ about the natural world and ‘antirealist’ about anything else). I want to say that this view is trivially true or trivially false, depending on whether we mean the e-world or the i-world when we talk about ‘what there is’. In neither case is there an interesting philosophical issue—the appearance that there is one rests on confusing these two senses of ‘world’. [WSMCP 138]

In other words, I think that Sellars should accept that mathematical facts, moral facts, modal facts, and the like, are “not inferior, just different”. [WSMCP 138] that for *fact*, as for other semantic notions, we have had to recognise that the notion has an inclusive sense and an exclusive sense. In the exclusive or narrow sense, it is a matter of definition that all the facts there are natural facts (that’s what the narrow notion *is*). [ISTPP 14]

my diagnosis is that we need inclusive and exclusive notions of *world*, just as we do for *fact* and the other notions we have mentioned. And for *world*, as for *fact*, it becomes a trivial matter that the world is the natural world, or a trivial matter that it is not, depending on which of the two senses we have in mind – so there is no space here for substantial metaphysical naturalism or metaphysical nonnaturalism, of the old varieties. As I would put it, paraphrasing Sellars, ‘The way is [now] clear to an *ungrudging* recognition that many [*facts, objects and properties*] which [naturalists] have relegated to second class citizenship ... are not *inferior, just different*.’ [ISTPP 15]

If and insofar as that is right about Price, I want to allow an even more generalized notion of description. It goes with vocabularies (idioms) that epistemically track and are semantically governed, not just by facts (states of affairs) specifiable in *naturalistic* vocabularies, but by facts or states of affairs specifiable in *any* vocabulary: paradigmatically, in modal or normative vocabulary.

But *not* in *logical* vocabulary. Q: Why not? I am not a Tractarian about them. A: Because I *am* an expressivist about them. They are not in the fact-stating line of work, except in the general, declarativist sense. But post-Sellarsian Kantian categorial expressivism is expressivist in essentially the same sense about alethic and deontic modalities: they too, like logical vocabulary, are categorial in being LX for every ADP. So the question would seem to remain: is there any reason to reject *logical* facts as epistemically tracked by and semantically governing logical vocabulary-use? I don’t see that there is.

In these two discussions (Price on Sellars and Price on McDowell and Sellars), as well as the ongoing reciprocal interchanges between Price and me, you get something very valuable: a view of the philosophers of what is sometimes called the “Pittsburgh School” *from the outside*. You can see how Sellars, McDowell, and I look to a sympathetic non-Pittsburgher. He is sympathetic to begin with in that he considers himself a Rortyan pragmatist. And we see him aiming to synthesize what he, following Misak, calls “Cambridge pragmatism” with these Pittsburgh views.

This effort is continued in the two Blackburn pieces, one on my Locke lectures and one on the whole Sellarsian tradition.

Both are concerned to map out the various positions in philosophical space, to redescribe and reconceive that space based on the new possibilities that emerge in the conversation, and to find ways to bridge gaps and synthesize different positions as they show up in that new context.

What has happened here is that for *fact*, as for other semantic notions, we have had to recognise that the notion has an inclusive sense and an exclusive sense. In the exclusive or narrow sense, it is a matter of definition that **all the facts there are** are natural facts (that's what the narrow notion *is*). In the inclusive or broad sense, it is immediate – not quite a matter of stipulation, perhaps, but an observation easily made about our language, once the question is in front of us – that this is not the case. Either way, then, there is no interesting *metaphysical* thesis in the offing. So Sellars's account of matter-of-factual truth, far from supporting an argument for the kind of bare naturalism that McDowell opposes, actually provides us with grounds for denying that there could be such an argument. [ISTPP 14]

BB: I want to accept this, but with a strong reservation about the ultimate intelligibility of the phrase: “all the facts there are.” For that requires quantifying over all vocabularies.

Since:

- a) any vocabulary will, by my criteria of demarcation, make it possible to use declarative sentences (the ones whose free-standing utterance has the default significance of asserting or claiming), and
- b) any such declarative sentences will be “truth-evaluable” and embeddable, so express *propositional* conceptual contents, and so
- c) when true, will state *facts*.

All of this is part of what I have called “declarativism.”

I do not claim that the notion of “all possible vocabularies” cannot be *given* a sense. (I even have some views about how one might do so.) What I claim is that it does not *come* with a determinate, defensible sense. To give it one requires heavy-duty theorizing, of the sort I engage in in *Making It Explicit*, which purports to offer necessary and sufficient conditions on being an autonomous discursive practice (ADP): a language-game one could play (engage in) though one played no other.

my diagnosis is that **we need inclusive and exclusive notions of world, just as we do for fact** and the other notions we have mentioned. And for *world*, as for *fact*, it becomes a trivial matter that the world is the natural world, or a trivial matter that it is not, depending on which of the two senses we have in mind – so there is no space here for substantial metaphysical naturalism or metaphysical nonnaturalism, of the old varieties. As I would put it, paraphrasing Sellars, ‘□e way is [now] clear to an *ungrudging* recognition that many [*facts, objects and properties*] which [naturalists] have relegated to secondclass citizenship ... are not *inferior*, just *different*.’ [ISTPP 15]

He also discusses (briefly) world of objects vs. world of facts, pointing out that Sellars commits himself to the reistic (Kotarbinski) view of a world of objects.

So deflating ‘describing’ doesn’t alter the fact that Sellars is agreeing with empiricism that a fruitful approach is ‘sideways-on’ – to explain the role of the *vocabularies*,⁹ not to investigate the nature of moral or modal *facts*. [ISTPP 15]

McDowell:

Some of these essays can thus be taken to defend a version of what has been called “moral realism”. But that label would risk obscuring the fact that what I urge is more negative than positive; *my stance in these essays is better described as “anti-anti-realism” than as “realism”*. What I urge is that anti-realist positions such as emotivism and its sophisticated descendants, all the way down to **Simon Blackburn’s projectivist quasi-realism**, are responses to a misconception of the significance of the obvious fact that ethical, and more generally evaluative, thinking is not science. [ISTPP 17]

V. Price’s Path from *Time’s Arrow*
Part...: Price’s Path from *Time’s Arrow*

[Mention that I’ve put the ToC, Introduction and the first and concluding chapters of *Time’s Arrow* in the “Suggested Reading” section for this week, for anyone who wants to go a little deeper into this bit.]

Didn’t get to this material in Week 10.
It is carried over to Week 11.

***Time’s Arrow*, and Price’s path from there to pragmatism as subject naturalism and expressivism.**

On *Time’s Arrow*:

[Apologize in advance that this is not an area in which I have specialized knowledge, nor one that I have thought hard about. What follows is a book report.]

As I understand it, Price thinks that physics begs to be expressed in a particular kind of vocabulary, one that articulates the “**view from no-when**”—modeled on Nagel’s “view from nowhere” as a notion of objectivity. In particular, this requires coming to terms the complete *symmetry* of the time variable in fundamental physics: general relativity theory (GTR) and quantum mechanics (QM). The task he is trying to help us with is figuring out what it would be like to reason about physical phenomena in a way that takes full cognizance of the *reversibility* of temporal processes at the microlevel. He does not think we can actually talk and think this way. We are creatures who live in a time-directed way. This is because we are agents, and our doings exhibit a causal asymmetry. But he wants to help us get as far as we can in imagining what it would be like to speak of things in a vocabulary that expresses a “view from no-when,” and that does *not* discriminate past from future in any asymmetric way.

Physicists worry about how the “arrow of time,” the asymmetry between past and future, arises out of the underlying symmetry of fundamental physics.

There are three kinds of phenomena that have been appealed to in explaining this:

1. **Statistical thermodynamics:** in particular, the Second Law, that entropy increases,
2. **Radiation phenomena:** light, or ripples in a pond
3. **Cosmological phenomena:** asymmetry between Big Bang and Big Crunch.

The bulk of the book is taken up with arguing that *none* of these adequately accounts for temporal asymmetries as matters of objective physics.

Each of them illicitly smuggles in asymmetries, which are then projected into the phenomena to be explained.

This does not happen because the arguments are made in bad faith, but because the assumptions that lead to the asymmetries are so natural to temporal creatures like ourselves that they are essentially invisible until Price teases them out.

In the case of statistical thermodynamics, the smuggled assumption is that a low entropy state (which will then evolve to a high entropy state) is the “natural” starting point, in an objective sense. But the physics does not demand this. The naturalness is for creatures like us. The physics of *all* the phenomena in (1)-(3) are reversible on the time axis. They are perfectly compatible with “backwards causation,” where the effects precede the cause.

Our practical lives are *not* compatible with backwards causation, and it is *this* that gives time a direction *for us*. Time moves “forward” because we act and so live forward.

Time’s arrow is the reflection of facts about *us*, and would not show up in a *complete* story of the physics, couched properly in a vocabulary expressing a “view from no-when.”

McTaggart (a prominent *Cambridge* philosopher—and Price’s views are related in complicated ways I do not understand to those of his *Cambridge Doktorvater* Huw Mellor) distinguished the “A-Series” from the “B-series” of time. Now we would talk about “A-relations” and “B-relations.”

B-relations are two-place: before and after, or *n* seconds before or after.

A-relations pick an indexical “now”, and talk about things in relation to it: “past”, “future”.

The A-relations depend on us *demonstratively* picking out *now*, and then using that as a basis for co-ordinatization.

(Cf. the issue in philosophical theology: can God use demonstratives and indexicals? Their use requires being *located in* space and time. So perhaps he cannot. But there are *essentially* indexical thoughts. (John Perry on “The Essential Indexical”, David Lewis on “Modalities *De Se*”.) So it seems there are thoughts *we* can have that God cannot.)

(These issues are related to *perdurantism* and *endurantism* about spatiotemporal continuants: roughly the question of whether spatiotemporal continuants have temporal parts in exactly the same sense that they have spatial parts—or, more nuanced: how to describe (what vocabulary to use to describe) the respects of similarity and difference between these two kinds of ‘parts’ that physical objects have.)

Price sees physics as working with symmetric B-relations, and the A-relations as the result of how things appear to us, including the asymmetry between past and future.

Some have taken the B-relations to be objective, and the A-relations to be, in effect, secondary qualities, existing only in relation to us, and in that sense being appearances rather than objective realities. Price's view in *TA* is generically of this sort.

This is the sense in which Price's take in *TA* both

- i) **accepts the Kantian problematic** of assigning responsibility for features of our practice to the objective world talked about (note representationalist assumption) and to our subjective constitution, and
- ii) **sees the asymmetry of time as anthropogenic**, in the sense of reflecting features of our practice rather than of the objective world.

His official goal in *TA* is to help us begin to imagine what it would be like to talk and think in a vocabulary we cannot in fact use: one that expresses a "view from no-when" in that it eschews temporal asymmetries

I conjecture that when he became interested in this issue, and thought hard about what it is to deploy a vocabulary, he came to see the enterprise of dividing up responsibility according to the Kantian problematic as essentially involving optional representationalist presuppositions. The interesting question is not about the nature of the objective quantity *time*, but about the differences and relations between properly agentive vocabularies and vocabularies, such as that of fundamental physics, that incorporate the "view from no-when." That is the nature of the Rortyan revolution in his thought.

Classical pragmatism is sometimes seen as a kind of *subjectivism*. William James's famous remark that "the trail of the human serpent is over all," and the James-Dewey relativization of everything to—or perhaps better, filtering of everything through—human interests, and, above all, the rejection of semantic representationalism in the form of "spectator theories" of the mind as the mirror of nature have led to thinking of the view as rejecting objectivity, rejecting the conception of an reality that is objective in the sense of being as it is independent of our attitudes. Rorty's invocation of the post-Quinean notion of vocabularies (which is what lets him make contact with literary theory in the way he does) for much the same purposes then appears to be just an updating of this James-Dewey version of pragmatism, using "vocabularies" instead of, or as a more sophisticated successor account of the crucial discursive form taken by what James and Dewey thought of as needs, wants, and interests. Though her view is of course substantially more nuanced than this caricature, something like this understanding, I think, is what leads Misak to reject the James-Dewey wing of classical American pragmatism of which Rorty is the latest exponent, in favor of the science-and-objectivity-favoring Peirce-Lewis-Sellars wing.

I urged that one of the deepest and most important consequences Rorty extracts from his thorough-going embrace of the 'vocabulary' vocabulary is that, properly understood, it should enable us to **escape the Kantian problematic** entirely. His view is that we should reject the ultimate intelligibility of the assignment of *responsibility* for some features of our talk to what we are talking *about* (representeds are responsible for them) and *responsibility* for other features

of our talk to our practices of representing. Understanding what it would be like to think about vocabularies-in-use in a way that precludes asking the Kantian question is one of the deepest and most difficult challenges Rorty leaves us with. *Can* it really be done? What do things look like if one manages? And *should* it be done? Is it at least worth trying to bring off this difficult feat? It is hard to address this latter question without being able to see what it takes to adopt a metavocabulary that does not admit of the Kantian problematic, not because it is too expressively impoverished to formulate it, but because of the terms in which it *adequately* (by standards the formulation of which is part and parcel of clearly conceiving this alternative) construes using vocabularies.

But this way of understanding one of Rorty's lessons shows that the understanding of what *he* makes of the James-Dewey tradition as *subjectivist* can't be right. For that sort of subjectivism consists in assigning *all* the responsibility to the *subjects* whose discursive practices are at issue, and *none* to the *objects* being talked about, the facts being expressed. Thinking of things this way only makes sense *within* the Kantian problematic. Whatever one gets by rejecting the presuppositions that make that problematic intelligible, it isn't going to be properly understood as a form of subjectivism.

In this regard, it is interesting to think about Price's distinction between subject naturalism and object naturalism. Accepting his "priority thesis"—the claim that we must ask the subject naturalist question about any vocabulary-in-use *first*, in order to see whether a representationalist semantics (necessary for asking the object naturalist question) is appropriate for it or not—is not, I think, properly criticizable as a form of *subjectivism*, in the sense in which subjectivism presupposes the intelligibility of the Kantian problematic.

What this brings out is that the Kantian problematic is intelligible *only* on the basis of representationalist assumptions. For it is asking whether what we are talking *about*, what we are *representing* (whether it be objects or objective facts) is *responsible* for various features of our discursive practice. Any vocabulary that is not properly understood as being in the business of describing or representing how things objectively are is not one can raise the Kantian problematic for.

Price puts his project in *TA* firmly inside the Kantian problematic.

He asks: which features of our *physical* (naturalistic) worldview are as they are because of how the *world* is, and which features are as they are because of our *anthropocentric* take on it.

At least at the time of *TA* (1996), Price clearly did not endorse *this* sort of pragmatism. **(Rorty is not mentioned in *TA*, and the words 'pragmatism' and 'pragmatist' do not occur in it.)** Is what he is doing simply incompatible with the deep Rortyan rejection of the Kantian problematic?

I think not. He clearly comes around to a radically antirepresentationalist position in the decade that follows *TA*. We have been looking at some features of the evolution of that view, from

about 2006 to 2013. It would be interesting to know more about the intellectual trajectory that took him from the 1996 *TA* to the Rortyan pragmatist antirepresentationalism of a decade later. We will read some of his work in the philosophy of language from that intervening period, to try to fill in the blanks, here.

For the lesson I think we should learn from Rorty is not so much that the Kantian problematic is *ipso facto* unintelligible, but that it doesn't come with a clear sense. If it is to *be* intelligible, we must *make* it intelligible.

- The first presupposition of doing so is the appreciation that the Kantian problematic depends on a *representational* semantic model. Only in such a context can we raise a question about a division of labor between represented objects and representing subjects.
- Second, we have to understand that semantic representational relation between representings and representeds as at base an issue of *responsibility*. We see this if we have taken on board the idea that representation in Kant's sense is a normative matter of the *authority* of representeds over representings, the *responsibility* of representings to what counts as represented by them just in virtue of serving as standards for the normative assessment of the correctness or accuracy of the representings, in a distinctive semantic sense of 'correct' or 'accurate'.
- Third, we adopt the social pragmatist view of normative statuses such as responsibility. This is the view that *normative* statuses are always *social* statuses, in the sense that to talk about normative statuses such as responsibility and authority (commitment and entitlement, commanding superior and obedient subordinate) is always to talk about statuses that are ultimately to be understood as conferred by the practical attitudes of those who attribute and acknowledge those statuses—the way the subjects of those attitudes are practically treated by the members of some community, the role they play in the practices of that community.

The challenge I see Rorty as bequeathing us is *either* to figure out how to talk in ways that do not make it possible to raise the basic question of the Kantian problematic, by developing nonrepresentational semantic or pragmatic metavocabularies, *or* to *make* sense of the Kantian problematic in the light of the three pragmatist insights just listed.

The principal task required by grasping the latter horn of the Rortyan dilemma is to make good pragmatist sense of what it *means* for some aspect of a vocabulary-in-use to be not only causally or dispositionally *responsive* to but semantically *responsible* to something it is accordingly intelligible as representing. In Price's later terms, this is asking what species of i-representation institute e-representational significance or confer e-representational content. I think this is a task on which one can do substantive, detailed philosophical work, and towards which one can make significant progress.

And *this* is what Price is doing in inviting us to make sense of a vocabulary of “no-when.” **His questions**, I conjecture that he came to see, **was what we would need to do in order to be talking and thinking in a “no-when” way.** Fundamental physics does, but then falters, when moving from micro to macro.