

# Toward a Non-Ideal Philosophy of Language

David Beaver and Jason Stanley

The point of a discourse—at least one central kind of discourse—is the exchange of information.  
—Stalnaker, “On the Representation of Context”<sup>1</sup>

Words can be like tiny doses of arsenic: they are swallowed unnoticed, appear to have no effect, and then after a little time the toxic reaction sets in after all.  
—Klemperer, *The Language of the Third Reich*<sup>2</sup>

## 1. Introduction

**For at least a decade**, political philosophy and political science have been entangled in a debate about “ideal theory” versus “non-ideal theory.” The goal of ideal theory is to contrast different versions of an ideal state in an effort to discover the ideal principles of justice. Such a project makes various idealizations—that citizens of the candidate ideal states are willing and able to abide by mutually agreed upon principles and policies, that, in short, citizens are willing to work together toward implementing a common vision of a just state. What is excluded by the idealizations of ideal theory is not obviously relevant to its aim, which is to use intuitions to decide on the structure of the ideal state. Non-ideal theory, by contrast, explores questions that arise when these idealizations do not obtain—such as our actual political condition. The debates that have roiled political philosophy and political science concern, among other things, the relative priority of ideal and non-ideal theory. And since non-ideal theorizing has been to some extent marginalized, questions about the shape and form of non-ideal theory in political philosophy and political science are also relevant.

The debates in political philosophy and political science about non-ideal theory raise intriguing questions about theoretical assumptions

structuring other domains. In some areas of the study of language, particularly in philosophy of language (more specifically, semantics), there are assumptions analogous to the idealizations of political philosophy. Corresponding to the assumption of a well-ordered society, there is the assumption of linguistic cooperativity—that speaker and audience are working together toward a common goal. In his now classic essay, “Ideal Theory’ as Ideology,” which shaped contemporary discussion in political philosophy and political science, Charles Mills critiques the idealization of “an idealized cognitive sphere.”<sup>3</sup> Mills singles out for special disdain the idealization of a “general social transparency,” which

will be presumed, with cognitive obstacles minimized as limited to biases of self-interest or the intrinsic difficulties of understanding the world, and little or no attention paid to the distinctive role of hegemonic ideologies and group-specific experience in distorting our perceptions and conceptions of the social order.<sup>4</sup>

Theorists of meaning also assume a “general social transparency.”<sup>5</sup> In the Gricean program, for example, it is a standard assumption that speaker intentions are transparent—no one has devious, hidden intentions.<sup>6</sup> The fact that there are parallel ideals in Anglo-American liberal political philosophy and Anglo-American philosophy of language raises questions and challenges—it suggests the promise of analogous critiques and it raises the question of non-ideal philosophy of language.

Anglo-American theory of meaning (understood broadly to include, for example, contributions of many continental European semanticists working in the same tradition) differs from Anglo-American political philosophy in having a longer tradition of singling out ideals for critique. It is easy to read Frege and Russell and think that truth-conditional content (or informational content) is the central notion in the theory of meaning. J.L. Austin begins *How to Do Things with Words* by critiquing the assumption that description of the world, “fact-stating,” is the main business of statements.<sup>7</sup> This is a theme to which Austin returns throughout the work.<sup>8</sup> *How to Do Things with Words* is a critique of the idealization that capturing the informational content of an utterance is the main aim of a theory of meaning. Similarly, although it is easy to read many traditions in philosophy of language as ignoring the communicative importance of speech practices, as idealizing away from them, in the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein emphasizes their centrality.<sup>9</sup> This is perhaps one reason why the specific contours of the debate in political philosophy have not simultaneously been reflected in the theory of meaning. Non-ideal critique is more familiar in philosophy of language, as traditions initiated by Austin and Wittgenstein are squarely within the mainstream today.

This paper, adapted from the first chapter of our forthcoming book *Hustle: The Politics of Language*, is an attempt to systematize and build upon existing non-ideal critiques. We begin with concerns about the relative paucity of work on, and insights into, the functioning of anti-democratic political speech, which we attribute to an overly narrow set of examples. This narrow focus has led to idealizations that filter political speech out from the core data of semantic and pragmatic theorizing in linguistics and philosophy of language. Idealizations with such consequences should be at minimum viewed with suspicion, on the grounds that they threaten to exclude by accident important swaths of evidence. This part of the project is critique. The other part concerns theory construction. In this paper, we sketch a conception of the theory of meaning that focuses on political speech as a core example, which has different goals than standard practice—such as capturing unintended communicative effects—and different key concepts, such as that of a speech practice. The book that this paper begins is devoted to adjusting, reinterpreting, and modifying tools, concepts, and understandings thereof to incorporate the resources we need to understand speech in a non-ideal world.

## **2. Violent language**

Suppose you and your partner are making a meal together. Your partner tells you, “I need carrots.” You helpfully respond by giving them carrots. Without language, it would be considerably trickier to make a meal together, much less hold a constitutional convention. Making a meal together and planning a society together are both cooperative activities. Language is an invaluable tool in complex cooperative activities. Without it, we humans would not have leveraged our sociality into a position of such immense power over the Earth. Philosophers, linguists, and psychologists have devoted a great deal of attention to how language enables us to communicate what we know, which is presumably a central component in an account of how language makes cooperative activity so efficient. The obvious answer is something like this: words are labels for things and kinds of things. When we communicate to accomplish shared projects, we can communicate our knowledge about facts by describing those facts with language. When one of us expresses knowledge that is relevant to the other’s projects, the other acquires knowledge about which things are among which kinds of things, knowledge that aids them in accomplishing their task. There is thus a natural link between the idealization of cooperativity and the idealization that language is there to communicate information.

The descriptive function of language, however, is only one of its many uses. Consider the example of *genocide*. Genocides are characteristically preceded by harsh rhetoric and conspiracy theories aimed at targets of violence. The function of conspiracy theories is not only—and not even primarily—descriptive but also, more importantly, to create in-group and out-group boundaries, dehumanizing their targets and trying to legitimize terrible actions against these targets. In the build-up to genocide, language is used to coordinate among those who are considered legitimately “of the people.” But language is *also* characteristically used to demarcate and isolate a targeted population during the process leading up to their mass extermination, to reduce empathy for them, to exclude and silence them. Part of this use is to coordinate action. But one might be skeptical that an account of communication solely geared toward coordinating action will explain the various mechanisms at work in raising disgust and fear about out-groups.

Rwandan Tutsis and Hutus share many features that suggest that they belong to the same ethnic group: they speak the same language and traditionally share a religion. Despite these commonalities, the remarkable human capacity to rapidly form out-groups for idiosyncratic ideological reasons was a central force in enabling the conditions for a genocide in which Rwandan Hutus killed Rwandan Tutsis *en masse*.<sup>10</sup> Language was an essential part of the process by which Hutus dehumanized the Tutsis; in the lead-up to the genocide, Tutsis were referred to as “inyenzi” and “inzoka” (Kinyarwanda for “cockroach” and “snake,” respectively).<sup>11</sup> As Lynne Tirrell has vividly made clear, this was part of the process that enabled Hutus to treat their fellow Rwandans as cockroaches and snakes.<sup>12</sup> Such language enabled actions, she argues, via generating associations with practices of, for example, killing snakes. Tirrell’s analysis of the dehumanizing function of “inyenzi” and “inzoka” essentially appeals to practices connected to these terms. Her work suggests that we need to speak of practices associated with terms to understand the dehumanization that precedes genocide.

Victor Klemperer describes a linguistic process he calls *objectification* as follows:

why does a palpable and undeniable brutality come to light when a female warder in Belsen concentration camp explains to the war crimes trial that on such and such a day she dealt with sixteen “Stück” *Gefangenen* [prisoner pieces]? . . . *Stück* . . . involves objectification. It is the same objectification expressed by the official term “the utilization of carcasses (*Kadaververwertung*),” especially when widened to refer to human corpses: fertilizer is made out of the dead of concentration camps.<sup>13</sup>

Linguistic objectification involves diverse mechanisms. To speak of prisoners as “pieces” involves employing a way of speaking to describe humans that has presuppositions that restrict its application to non-humans. And to understand Klemperer’s second example, we must also understand the connections between practices and “official terms.”

John J. DiIulio, Jr.’s 1996 magazine article “My Black Crime Problem, and Ours” begins by acknowledging that “violent crime is down in New York and many other cities.”<sup>14</sup> DiIulio proceeds to predict “270,000 more young predators on the streets . . . [in] the next two decades.”<sup>15</sup> He adds, “as many as half of these juvenile super-predators could be young [B]lack males.”<sup>16</sup> DiIulio’s prediction was very far off; violent crime continued to plummet.<sup>17</sup> But the introduction of the term “super-predator” into criminal justice discourse led (in ways that are difficult to quantify and yet hard to dispute) to the adoption of ever-harsher laws concerning juvenile offenders.

In the 1990s in the United States, criminal justice policy had become a proving ground for politicians to demonstrate their putative toughness. Debate was dominated by an ethos that frowned on expressions of empathy for perpetrators. Dehumanizing vocabulary targeting those caught up in the criminal justice system was commonplace and many of the words were racially coded (“super-predator,” “thug,” “gang member,” though not “sex offender”).<sup>18</sup> Rehabilitation is hard to envisage for those described as “thugs,” “super-predators,” or “gangsters”; these are words that describe persons whose characters are resistant to any such method. During the period where these terms were part of the political discourse, criminal justice practices became harshly retributive.<sup>19</sup>

Although the precise mechanisms continue to be a matter of debate, it is widely agreed that the culture surrounding criminal justice policy had an extreme and rapid effect on criminal justice practices. The incarceration rate in the United States hovered around the norm for liberal democracies of 100 per 100,000 for many decades until the late 1970s.<sup>20</sup> Then it started to rise. The Bureau of Justice Statistics’ current rate of 860 for every 100,000 adults (18 years and older) in prison is by far the highest in the world.<sup>21</sup> The United States has also developed a culture of policing marked by a level of fear and lack of empathy that is without parallel in liberal democracies (a 2015 headline of an article in *The Guardian* states “By the Numbers: U.S. Police Kill More in Days than Other Countries Do in Years”<sup>22</sup>). However, the unprecedented decrease in crime since 1991 is not strictly due to the intensely punitive criminal justice path the United States chose to take in the 1990s. Canada has experienced a similarly unprecedented drop in crime during this same time period, without following the United States’ path into mass incarceration.<sup>23</sup>

Until this point, American politicians had typically avoided explicitly dehumanizing rhetorical strategies, even with regards to widely disparaged groups. In the 1980s and 1990s, this mechanism of protection evaporated in the debate surrounding criminal justice. American politicians eagerly trolled for votes by employing incendiary rhetoric to describe criminal offenders.<sup>24</sup> The result is the current crisis of mass incarceration in the United States.

The 45th President of the United States, Donald Trump, ran for the presidency by focusing on policy debates whose structure parallels that of the criminal justice debate, where there is a clear “friend/enemy” distinction exploitable for political gain, such as citizen/immigrant and patriot/terrorist. His rhetoric has emulated the dehumanizing tropes of the criminal justice debates in the late 1980s and 1990s. This is no accident, as Trump developed his rhetorical style during these very debates. Indeed, any history of Trump’s rhetoric must include the full-page advertisement he published in several New York City newspapers in 1989 during the trial of the Central Park Five—the five teenagers on trial for the brutal rape of a jogger in Central Park—entitled “Bring Back the Death Penalty. Bring Back Our Police!”<sup>25</sup> It said that the “crazed misfits” causing crime on city streets “should be forced to suffer and, when they kill, they should be executed for their crimes” (the teenagers were later discovered to be innocent).<sup>26</sup> In his 2016 campaign, and in the lead-up to the 2018 midterm elections, he made the topic of crime central. Trump urged the country, in language evoking hearkening back to the ’80s and ’90s, “to get a lot tougher on crime.”<sup>27</sup>

In a tweet from June 19, 2018, Trump described immigrants as “infesting” the United States.<sup>28</sup> And with some regularity he reads the poem “The Snake” at rallies, drawing analogies between the snake in the poem, which kills the person who rescues it, and immigrants to the United States.<sup>29</sup> It may be tempting to say that such representations are unlikely to affect public debate. However, history suggests that this is wishful thinking. The representation of targeted groups as insects or vermin was a theme in Nazi propaganda about Jewish people,<sup>30</sup> and in the buildup to the Rwandan genocide. The United States’ recent history with criminal justice debates suggests that the country may be particularly vulnerable to acting on harsh rhetoric.

In their 2017 paper “Backlash: The Politics and Real-World Consequences of Minority Group Dehumanization,” Nour Kteily and Emile Bruneau explore what they call “blatant dehumanization,” using the Trump campaign’s rhetoric toward Mexican immigrants and Muslims as a model.<sup>31</sup> They “observed high levels of prejudice and dehumanization toward Mexican immigrants” (B 90). They assessed prejudice

using a feeling thermometer rating of Mexican immigrants on a 0 (*very cold*) to 100 (*very warm*) scale.<sup>32</sup> Scores were reversed, such that higher scores indicate greater prejudice. Other groups assessed were Americans, Europeans, Arabs, Iranians, Muslims, Doctors, and Welfare recipients. (B 89)

Blatant dehumanization was scored by asking participants a series of questions:

Specifically, participants were asked to “Please rate how well the following terms describe Mexican immigrants” on a 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much so*) scale: “savage, aggressive,” “backward, primitive,” “lacking morals,” “barbaric, cold-hearted,” “refined and cultured” (reverse coded), “rational and logical” (reverse coded), “scientifically/technologically advanced” (reverse coded), “capable of self-control” (reverse coded), and “mature, responsible” (reverse coded). Scores on these nine items were averaged . . . and standardized, and then combined with the standardized ratings of Mexican immigrants on the Ascent scale<sup>33</sup> . . . to create a composite of blatant dehumanization. (Ibid.)

What they found was that

on the feeling thermometer Mexican immigrants were rated almost 40 points below the scale maximum, and on the Ascent scale of blatant dehumanization they were rated almost 25 points below the scale maximum . . . . By way of comparison, participants rated Americans, on average, about 18 points higher than Mexican immigrants on the feeling thermometer, and about 12 points higher on the Ascent scale (both these ratings were significantly higher than those for Mexican immigrants). (B 90)

The results were even grimmer for Muslims:

Muslims were rated approximately 50 points below the scale maximum on the feeling thermometer, and almost 30 points below the scale maximum on the Ascent scale of blatant dehumanization . . . . By way of comparison, participants rated Americans, on average, about 27 points higher than Muslims on the feeling thermometer, and about 16 points higher on the Ascent scale (both these ratings were significantly higher than those for Muslims). (B 93)

In both studies of blatant dehumanization of Mexican immigrants and Muslims, it “was more strongly correlated with support for Trump than any of the other Republican candidates” (ibid.).

Kteily and Bruneau do not tell us whether Trump simply took advantage of pre-existing ideology or rather employed rhetoric that (in some sense) *strengthened* that ideology. But their study does suggest a connection between support for Trump and blatant dehumanization. What we lack is an account of the relation between rhetoric and dehumanizing ideologies. The topic of the relation between rhetoric and ideology is

a question of great political import that lies squarely in the study of human communication, the effects of language; it is a topic that runs through non-ideal inquiry in the theory of meaning.

That Trump as a candidate was so easily able to exploit or reignite pre-existing oppressive ideologies is a testament to their lasting presence. Racist ideologies are persistent, even when wars are fought to overcome them. However, in the presence of a public ethos that repudiates them, it becomes unacceptable to endorse these ideologies in public; they remain submerged but are kept alive by politicians in oblique ways that allow for plausible deniability. A key mechanism to keep problematic ideologies alive, in the absence of a Trump-like figure who can gain political power by bringing them once more to the surface, is the use of manipulative speech, speech that appears on the surface to be essentially descriptive, but, when married to a hearer's background frame and value system, communicates a problematic message. The function of such coded language is to signal allegiance to an explicitly repudiated value system to those who share it, while explicitly issuing putatively unproblematic messages.

In 1981, Lee Atwater, later to lead George H.W. Bush's 1988 presidential campaign (featuring the notorious Willie Horton advert<sup>34</sup>), had an anonymous interview with a journalist that remains one of the clearest expressions of the strategic value of code words to signal allegiance to ideologies that have been explicitly repudiated. In it, he famously said:

You start out in 1954 by saying, "Nigger," "nigger," "nigger." By 1968 you can't say "nigger"—that hurts you, backfires. So you say stuff like, uh, forced busing, states' rights, and all that stuff, and you're getting so abstract. Now, you're talking about cutting taxes, and all these things you're talking about are totally economic things and a byproduct of them is, [B]lack get hurt worse than whites. . . . "We want to cut this," is much more abstract than even the busing thing, uh, and a hell of a lot more abstract than "Nigger," "nigger."<sup>35</sup>

Subsequent research by the Princeton political science professors Martin Gilens and Tali Mendelberg has confirmed the success of the strategy of linking talk of welfare programs to the idea that Black Americans are unfit to have their perspectives taken into account. Their research shows that expressions like "welfare," "the poor," "food stamps," and "homeless" all contribute to priming the thought that Black Americans are lazy.<sup>36</sup> Gilens finds that "the belief that [B]lack are lazy is the strongest predictor of the perception that welfare recipients are undeserving" (AHW 95). There is a large amount of evidence that welfare has been connected with racist ideology, in addition to the studies Gilens himself has carried out. Gilens reports similar results from the "welfare mother" experiment from the National Race and Politics Study of 1991:



Respondents are asked their impressions of a welfare recipient described as either a [B]lack or white woman in her early thirties, who has a ten-year-old child and has been on welfare for the past year. Respondents are first asked how likely it is that the woman described will try hard to find a job, and second, how likely it is that she will have more children in order to get a bigger welfare check. (AHW 97–8)

The largest predictor of opposition to welfare programs was one's bias against Black mothers receiving various state benefits, where the study found that "non-[B]lack respondents with the most negative views of [B]lack welfare recipients are 30 points higher in opposition to welfare than are those with the most positive views of [B]lack welfare mothers" (AHW 99). But why, one might ask, are these facts *linguistic*? Perhaps we can explain the political meaning of welfare merely by talking about the social programs that constitute welfare together with false beliefs, including the ones associated with racist ideology. Why are properties of language at issue here? Is it background commitments to individual responsibility that fuel Americans' obsession with the politics of welfare? Is it Americans' supposedly fierce opposition to "big government"? Is it background racist beliefs and false empirical beliefs about poverty in the United States? Can we explain the political meaning of welfare just by discussing the social programs themselves without discussing the meaning and use of words? Or do we need some explanation that invokes properties of the word "welfare" itself? In other words, do we need to talk about linguistic properties, presumably about the conventional significance or meaning of the word "welfare," to explain the phenomena?

Americans are fond of, and committed to, what are by far the United States' largest social welfare programs—Medicare and Social Security (AHW 30). But perhaps the powerful and widespread support for these programs is due to the fact that they "benefit large numbers of Americans of all social classes" (AHW 27) and American opposition to welfare programs has something to do with attitudes toward poverty, specifically? Here, too, the explanation would be non-linguistic.

In surveys from the 1990s that measure public support for government responsibilities—surveys that do not use the term "welfare" or other terms that evoke paradigmatic programs Americans think of as instances of welfare—we do not find sentiment against a large government role in providing jobs, housing, or other forms of assistance to needy Americans; in fact, quite the opposite is true (AHW 29). More generally,

When asked about spending for the poor, the public again expresses a desire for more, not less, government activity. Over 70 percent of Americans say we are spending too little on "fighting poverty," while a similar number think spending for the homeless needs to be increased.

Smaller numbers—but still majorities—think we are spending too little on “poor people,” on “assistance to the poor,” and on “child care for poor children.” And as was true for education, health care, child care, and the elderly, very few Americans believe spending for the poor should be reduced from current levels. (AHW 29)

In stark contrast, between 60 and 70 percent of Americans thought then that the government was spending too much on programs described as “welfare” or in terms of benefiting “people on welfare” (AHW 29). It is impossible to describe political communication in the United States—dating back to the 1970s, when Ronald Reagan’s campaign introduced the expression “welfare queen” into political discourse<sup>37</sup>—without talking about the connection between such value systems and the linguistic properties of words like “welfare.” In a 2018 article, Rachel Wetts and Robb Willer integrate multiple studies providing strong evidence that the connection between white racial resentment toward Black Americans and negative reactions to programs described as “welfare” continues unabated.<sup>38</sup>

A long-term goal of many on the American right is to cut funding to even very popular government programs that provide support to needy populations, including the elderly. In pursuit of this political goal, the fact that “welfare” and similar expressions such as “public assistance” give rise, among certain audiences, to negative reactions, has proven too tempting to not exploit. On March 13, 2017, Trump issued an executive order authorizing Mick Mulvaney, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, to oversee a complete reorganization of Federal Agencies. A draft of Mulvaney’s proposals was floated, entitled “Delivering Government Solutions in the 21st Century: Reform Plan and Reorganization Recommendations.”<sup>39</sup> The second proposal listed is “Consolidate Non-Commodity Nutrition Assistance Programs into HHS [Health and Human Services], Rename HHS the Department of Health and Public Welfare, and Establish the Council on Public Assistance.”<sup>40</sup> The proposal

moves a number of nutrition assistance programs . . . —most notably SNAP and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)—to HHS and, acknowledging the addition of these programs to the Agency, renames HHS the Department of Health and Public Welfare.<sup>41</sup>

As we have seen, it is the word “welfare” with which many Americans have negative associations, which for them taints anything labeled as such. The proposal recommends grouping Health and Human Services and food programs that many Americans use under the heading of welfare, in an attempt to tie its racial stigma to these programs. “Public assistance” is also a word that invokes negative racial associations

among certain audiences; appointing a Council on Public Assistance to monitor a vast sweep of government programs connects government spending to the negative racial sentiments some Americans associate with the words “public assistance.”<sup>42</sup>

Recall Gilens’ finding that the belief that Black people are lazy is the strongest predictor of the perception that welfare recipients are undeserving, or the study that non-Black respondents with the most negative views of Black welfare recipients are 30 points higher in opposition to welfare than are those with the most positive views of Black welfare mothers. The word “welfare” seems to signal a problematic racial message, despite its innocent explicit content. Words that have a seemingly neutral explicit content but have the effect, among certain audiences, of representing things in a decidedly non-neutral fashion, in ways that are disconnected from their literal meanings—for example, words that connote strongly negative associations—are called *dogwhistles*. A dogwhistle is an utterance that signals one apparently harmless thing to one audience and something very different, usually harmful, to a different audience.

In “Dogwhistles, Political Manipulation, and Philosophy of Language,” Jennifer Saul offers a pioneering investigation of the speech act of dogwhistling.<sup>43</sup> With dogwhistles, on Saul’s analysis, the shift in message between audiences is often (typically?) the result of different or even opposing value systems. What our previous discussion of the extensive research on racial resentment and welfare shows is that descriptions of programs as “welfare,” or persons as “on welfare,” are paradigm examples of dogwhistling. Describing a program as a “welfare program” gives rise to a strongly negative reaction to that program among one audience (those with at least some racial bias), and considerably less negative reactions among a different audience (composed of members with few indicators of racial bias). Racial bias is a value system; it is a way of valuing things—or, in this case, persons—on a metric of value at least partly determined by race. The word “welfare” signals one very negative message to an audience that endorses a racist value system and lacks this negative force with audiences who do not share that value system.

Saul makes an important distinction between different categories of dogwhistles. The category of overt intentional dogwhistles is the most straightforward to define but perhaps the least politically central. Kimberly Witten defines an overt intentional dogwhistle as

a speech act designed, with intent, to allow two plausible interpretations, with one interpretation being a private, coded message targeted for a subset of the general audience and concealed in such a way that this general audience is unaware of the existence of the second, coded interpretation.<sup>44</sup>

Saul introduces another category of dogwhistles, *covert intentional dogwhistles* (see DPM 364–7). Overt dogwhistles are meant to be understood as such by their target audiences. Covert intentional dogwhistles are not meant to be recognized as delivering hidden messages. An example Saul provides is “inner city”: this expression is meant to be *seen* as a race-neutral expression, but hearing it triggers negative responses in those disposed to racial bias (DPM 367). Something in the vocabulary triggers value systems that involve degrees of racism (ibid.). A covert intentional dogwhistle triggers a response, perhaps a negative affective one, in those who share the relevant value system. But the vocabulary is explicitly neutral. As we have seen now in detail, many or most uses of “welfare” in the context of the United States are covert intentional dogwhistles in Saul’s sense. Saul argues for one of the morals of this paper—that unintended effects of speech can be just as theoretically important as intended effects. In this regard, her (brilliant) example is the category of *unintentional* dogwhistles, which have the same effect on their target audiences as intentional dogwhistles (DPM 367–71). If someone inclined to racial bias hears a program described as “welfare,” the communicative intentions of the person who so described it are irrelevant to the effects upon the hearer.

In the 1990s, Bill Clinton appropriated the Republican racial rhetoric with his call to “end welfare as we know it,”<sup>45</sup> thereby attracting white voters who otherwise would have been loath to vote for a party connected to the attempt to lift Black American citizens to equality, which they understand as helping “the undeserving.” Demonizing poor Black Americans has been a successful electoral strategy for both the Democrats and the Republicans in the decades following the Civil Rights Movement. With such constant coded appeals to racist ideologies by both parties, it is little wonder that an openly racist presidential candidate would be seen as less hypocritical, as genuinely “authentic.”

During the first two years of his presidency, Trump has propagated a simple value system with clear enemies for grievances: immigrants and various unnamed forces behind “open borders” who were threatening the nation. As time has worn on, the outlines of this value system have become more explicit: Trump has claimed that he “wouldn’t be surprised” if George Soros, a prominent Jewish financier, was behind a caravan of Central and South American migrants headed toward the United States,<sup>46</sup> and he has explicitly proclaimed his allegiance to nationalism and his rejection of “globalism.”<sup>47</sup> He has denounced supposedly nefarious meddling by the Federal Reserve as the source of various economic problems, calling the Federal Reserve his “biggest threat.”<sup>48</sup> The thought that there is a shadowy conspiracy of “globalists” seeking to destroy the ethnic purity of individual nations is associated with com-

mon value systems in fascist and neo-Nazi movements. The idea that the Federal Reserve is part of this conspiracy has long been central to American versions of this ideology dating back to the 1930s.<sup>49</sup> Trump has been increasingly aligning himself with a classical form of anti-Semitism, but without mentioning Jewish people as behind this putative conspiracy. To anyone familiar with this version of anti-Semitism, including of course those who accept it, these are clear dogwhistles.

Perhaps Trump did not intend to tap into a classic anti-Semitic value system (though one might think the President of the United States has access to advisors who could explain this to him). Nevertheless, to restrict the study of political speech to intended effects distorts the phenomena. Recall the point made by Saul about the category of unintentional dogwhistles. Even if someone does not know that “inner city” is a racial dogwhistle, their use of it will encourage those whose value systems are aligned with racist ideologies. Unintended effects of speech can be just as pernicious as intended ones. Even if Trump does not understand the anti-Semitic associations of his vocabulary, those receptive to the relevant ultra-white-nationalist value system have seized upon their renewed salience to flesh them out explicitly, giving Trump’s rhetoric clear anti-Semitic force.

There are multiple forms of anti-Semitism. The form of anti-Semitism that obsessed Hitler did not involve hatred of a Jewish state—after all, Israel was not yet a country. Rather, it involved thinking of Jewish people as the force behind universal ideals of reason and human rights, a way to usurp the traditional dominance of Aryan men, using, variously, “universal” doctrines like liberalism, capitalism, or communism as methods.<sup>50</sup> The perceived legitimacy of this kind of anti-Semitism surely increases when nationalist, pro-Christian, anti-LGTBQ, and misogynistic value systems are embraced, or indeed when a value system that targets unnamed global financial forces is invoked.

If we think about political speech, we must think about how audiences’ value systems are exploited by politicians. And yet, the notion of a value system is not a part of the standard toolkit in philosophy of language. Nor is it part of the ordinary model that it may be necessary to invoke multiple audiences to understand the different communicative functions and effects of a single signal.

Language is a tool through which we communicate our knowledge in the service of mutual goals. Here, we need to think about information, although language is used in many other ways as well. What then is the point of language? This is the question with which Luvell Anderson, Sally Haslanger, and Rae Langton begin their paper, “Language and Race.” They write,

If we begin with that abstract question, we may be tempted toward a high-minded answer: “People say things to get other people to come to know things that they didn’t know before.”<sup>51</sup> The point is truth, knowledge, communication. If we begin with a concrete question, “What has language to do with race?” we find a different point: to attack, spread hatred, create racial hierarchy.<sup>52</sup>

According to Austin, “stating, describing, etc., are *just two* names among a very great many others for illocutionary acts; they have no unique position” (HDW 148–9). Focusing on description to the exclusion of other illocutionary acts obscures many of the elements that are central to communication. Austin’s ordinary language perspective allows us to see what is lost by focusing simply on describing. For example, in Lecture XII of *How to Do Things with Words*, Austin outlines five classes of speech acts, including verdictives and exercitives (HDW 151–64). Exercitives are “the exercising of powers, rights, or influences,” such as “appointing, voting, ordering, urging” (HDW 151). To judge whether a speaker is in the position to make an assertion, it is not in general necessary to have information about their social position relative to other participants in the discourse. In contrast, to judge whether a speaker is in the position to give an order to another person, it is necessary to have information about their social position. One moral of Austin’s work is that if we seek our account of communication to explain not just assertions but also orders, we need to be sensitive to the social position of the participants in the discourse.<sup>53</sup>

The point that a central aim of language is to communicate a higher social rank is at the heart of classical anti-colonial theory. It is not for nothing that chapter 1 of Frantz Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* is entitled “The Black Man and Language.”<sup>54</sup> In that chapter, he writes incisively about how the racial hierarchies that structure colonial domination are replicated in, and reinforced by, speech practices:

“I know [B]lack people; you have to talk to them kindly, talk to them about their country; knowing how to talk to them, that’s the key. Now here’s what you have to do . . .” This is no exaggeration. A white man talking to a person of color behaves exactly like a grown-up with a kid, simpering, murmuring, fussing, and coddling. It’s not just one person we have observed, but hundreds; and our observations were not limited to one category; insisting on a fundamentally objective attitude, we studied such behavior in physicians, police officers, and foremen on work sites.<sup>55</sup>

Fanon, writing in 1952, outlines a research program that carries through to the present day in social psychology and socio-linguistics: to describe the ways in which language is used to reinforce hierarchy in the service of domination. It is, at the very least, an open question whether a theory

designed to explain a system's use in the transmission of knowledge can also explain its uses in domination and subordination.

In psychology, there is of course a robust literature on the social psychological mechanisms that serve to justify hierarchies. Social dominance theory stems largely from the pioneering work of Jim Sidanius and Felicia Pratto,<sup>56</sup> who provide an account of the group psychological mechanisms (and social structures) that are used to justify belief in social hierarchies (including gender hierarchies).<sup>57</sup> There is more than two decades of work by John Jost, Mahzarin Banaji, and many distinguished co-authors on system justification theory, which is another approach to explaining the mechanisms that undergird justifications of social hierarchies.<sup>58</sup> Out of this work have emerged hypotheses about links between political ideologies and speech practices.<sup>59</sup> There is considerable work on linguistic intergroup bias that displays the different descriptions of the same act by in-group members and out-group members.<sup>60</sup> For instance, we praise someone in our in-group who shares a valued item with someone who would appreciate it as having a generous *character*; whereas, if they are in our out-group, we praise their *action* as a “nice thing to do.”<sup>61</sup> Shanette Porter, Michelle Rheinschmidt-Same, and Jennifer Richeson have provided evidence that the practice of linguistic intergroup bias is a reliable method to communicate social identity.<sup>62</sup> In a 2017 article, “Language from Police Body Camera Footage Shows Racial Disparities in Officer Respect,” Rob Voigt et al. used a data-set of 981 stops of Black motorists and 299 stops of white motorists in Oakland by 245 different officers of the Oakland Police Department to analyze differences in the speech practices officers employed with Black motorists and white motorists.<sup>63</sup> Using this data set, they found that test participants were in broad agreement that the officers' language in these interactions revealed lesser respect for Black motorists compared to white motorists.<sup>64</sup>

Many of us working on linguistic communication have been caught flat-footed by the emergence of robustly authoritarian politics. We find in feminist theory clear early warnings of the limitations of formal semantic frameworks in elucidating rhetoric that channels ideologies that reinforce unjust hierarchy and social position. For example, Sally McConnell-Ginet writes:

My background in analytic philosophy of language and formal semantics and pragmatics did not seem to equip me even to understand issues like “sexist” or “homophobic” language or some activists' claims that women and sexual minorities were handicapped in expressing their thoughts, in giving voice to their own perspectives. In teaching my first course on language and gender, I spent a lot of time on standard sociolinguistic issues, safely outside my own realm

of expertise and hence nonthreatening to my views about my particular domain of linguistic inquiry, formal semantics and pragmatics. Gender, sexuality, and other social matters seemed reassuringly distant from matters like quantificational scope or the semantics of comparative constructions. Together with my students, I explored the gendered dimensions of multilingualism and the pronunciation of vowels, the choreography of conversations (who interrupts, who takes responsibility for keeping the ball rolling, who sets the agenda), vocal effects and their role in indexing gendered and sexual identities, linguistic ideologies . . . . But I was careful to insist that only language use or users and not language itself could be sexist. I was also confident that there was no principled reason to accept any version of linguistic relativism, the view that some languages might be better suited than others to express certain ideas, to explore certain conjectures and theories, or to adopt certain perspectives. After all, I continued to think, languages just paste formal labels on concepts and combine them systematically. . . . Yet from my students, as well as from theorists in other disciplines and from those engaged in liberation struggles outside the academy, I kept hearing other views of language and its incorporation of bias, continued to encounter folks who experienced language as limiting and sometimes even wounding. I began to realize that perhaps content meaning was more complex and also more consequential than I (and many other linguists and philosophers of language) had thought.<sup>65</sup>

The theory of meaning should not simply stop at making sense of the attributions of truth values to utterances. It must also make sense of why people apply predicates such as “wounding,” “silencing,” “objectifying,” and “harmful” to speech acts. In order to study political speech, it may turn out that, beyond what contemporary formal semantics and pragmatics have to offer, we need new tools; we certainly need a new focus. When one moves away from a model of speech for people living in a democratic utopia to one more suitable for the real political situations in which we are more likely to find ourselves, then there are different goals and different central concepts. In the rest of this paper, we offer suggestions for refocusing philosophy of language in this regard.

### **3. Communicative Actions and Effects**

In discussing politics, we theorize not just about politicians’ intentions but also about what they *do* (lauding, inciting, criticizing, etc.), the *effects* of their discourse on members of their audience, and whether they were aware that their discourse had these effects or not. The key object of study is therefore the notion of a *communicative action* and its associated effects. In studying political speech, it is vital to attend to what Austin calls the *perlocutionary* effects of communicative action. Perlocutionary effects are the non-linguistic effects of an utterance in a specific context



(see HDW 94–107). It should be clear that an account of political speech must also attend carefully to perlocutionary effects. Austin was not thinking of political speech when writing *How to Do Things with Words*. But the topic of political speech underscores the importance of perlocutionary effects. If one has political speech clearly in mind when constructing a theory of meaning, it is difficult to ignore the importance of the consequences of speech (including the unintended consequences).

The centrality of communicative action can be masked in some traditions in the theory of meaning because of the way in which such theorists have abstracted from ordinary communication in their models. At the heart of Paul Grice's influential theory of meaning is the notion of *speaker meaning*.<sup>66</sup> Speaker meaning is assumed to be something that speakers intend to make fully manifest to their audiences. In opposition to such an approach, Tirrell urges for a refocusing of the theory of meaning to include *linguistic practices*:

Some theorists understand language primarily in terms of the communication of intentions. When Sally says, "Peter is tall," for example, they think the best way to understand what is happening is to think of her utterance as a means to enable the hearer to figure out what Sally's (communicative) intention is. It is because of her intention to get across a certain proposition (that Peter is tall) that she says what she says. The words help the hearer get at what is important, namely, Sally's communicative intention. On this view, language use is primarily a communicative tool between speaker and hearer.

What matters most is the recognition of the speaker's communicative intention. This framework, which treats speaker's intentions as primary for understanding what a particular speech act does, is too centered on individuals, as if we each could control the meanings of what we say. Surely, we do try, but often the meanings and actions associated with what we say extend far beyond our own awareness and control. In contrast, I focus on *linguistic practices*, which are non-individualistic and communal.<sup>67</sup>

The communicative effects of discourse can go well beyond what the speaker is willing to admit, and even well beyond what the speaker recognizes as the communicative effects of her discourse. Yet, as noted, among the idealizations of semantic and pragmatic theorizing is the conviction that interlocutors aim for (and regularly achieve) mutual transparency of communicative intention. In the standard ideal model, the speaker has a specific communicative intention and either expresses it as the content of a sentence they utter or communicates it pragmatically. Yet in looking at political speech, it is important to drop this idealization. Intended effects of communication are not automatically more significant, politically or socially, than *unintended* effects of communication. We are

also concerned with explaining effects of communication that are intended but deliberately *masked*.

What one is attempting to explain in describing political speech is its communicative significance. In order to do so, it is vital to think about *covertly* delivered effects that are nevertheless deliberate; Saul's example of covert intentional dogwhistles is paradigmatic here. And it is vital to think about *unintended* effects (see, for example, Saul on unintentional dogwhistles). It is even important to think about communicative effects that *would* have occurred in normal circumstances but did not. But is it really possible to frame a theory that covers this range of issues? We now briefly delve into some respects in which this is problematic, casting the issue in terms that have a long history in philosophical discourse.

Trying to give a theory about potential morally problematic effects of speech leads the theorist away from the category of mutually recognized, successfully communicated intentions and toward the more *general* notion of a communicative action. But is such a notion *too* general? There are at least two worries one could have here about the generality of the notion of a communicative action. The first is that it makes the notion into a jumble of elements rather than what philosophers often call a *natural kind*. The first worry leads naturally to the second. Philosophers take natural kinds, among which we can presumably include social natural kinds, to be the properties in the world (including the social world) that should guide our theoretical inquiry. An inquiry that takes non-natural kinds as the objects of study will be as disjunctive and as *ad hoc* as its objects of study. There is surely no systematicity to be found here, one might think.

So, framing the questions about the possibility of studying political language in basic terminology of philosophy of science, we have arrived at these questions: Are the objects of such a study—communicative actions, and their effects—a natural kind? Is political speech amenable to systematic study, or will it just be a description of ever-changing cultural facts? What we have said, of course, breaks no new ground: here, we merely seek to frame the issue.

#### 4. Is Rhetoric a Science?

The question at the heart of Plato's *Gorgias* is whether rhetoric is a craft (τέχνη).<sup>68</sup> There are disputes about what Plato means by a craft, but classic examples in ancient philosophy are medicine and navigation. Crafts, in the *Gorgias*, explicitly include both manual tasks, such as making shoes, and non-manual tasks, such as "arithmetic or computation or geometry, even checkers" (*Gorg.*, 450D). It is clear that a craft is, at the very least, a

discipline based on generalized principles that are known. Socrates' point, and indeed the main point of the dialogue, is to establish that rhetoric is a mere "knack" and not a craft and thus that devotion to the study of rhetoric is misplaced (see *Gorg.*, 462C–463B). The question of whether a project such as ours is possible is one of western philosophy's defining questions.

The first worry we articulated above was that the generality of the notion of a communicative action or its effects of speech makes either or both into a non-natural kind and hence an inappropriate object of analysis even for inquiries into social theory. One communicative action could be speaking in a high-pitched voice, for example. And such an action is only artificially separated from communicative actions that have to do with clearly non-linguistic aspects of the situation, such as the speaker's choice of clothing. This problem becomes pointed when we think of the case of media such as film, where arbitrary properties of the representation and the individuals depicted may lead to significant effects on audiences. In studying communication, and speech in particular, there is a danger of drawing artificial distinctions between communicative effects due to linguistic aspects of the speech situation and communicative effects that are equally present but non-linguistic.

Here is another way to make the point. We find propaganda in both pictures and text. Why study just the communicative effects of the *text*? We clearly have similar communicative effects with pictures and regular non-linguistic aspects of a speech situation. Moreover, we find pictures and text smoothly combined to deliver messages. Why not give a general theory for communicative effects?<sup>69</sup> Would that not obviate the need for a specific theory of the communicative effects of language? Why cut (social) reality *this* way?

Our answer to this question also serves as a reply to the second worry about the possibility of systematic theory. We have very good tools to understand linguistic communication when it is conceived in ideal terms. There is not anywhere near this kind of systematic theory for pictorial representation. In order to evaluate the claim about systematicity, we propose to start with the concepts and tools we know and then motivate modifying, adding to them, perhaps replacing some of them with others more suitable to explain the broader class of phenomena that interest us, and possibly weakening or stretching idealizations so as to give our account sufficient breadth of coverage to incorporate the phenomena in which we are most interested. Some of the tools and concepts that we develop will have applicability to communicative effects that stem from non-linguistic aspects of the speech situation. But our best bet to develop systematic theory is to start from where we already have one. Of course, in modifying, adding to, or replacing the tools and concepts of the theory of

meaning to account for communicative effects that are neither said nor meant, we may be sacrificing some of the explanatory value of those tools, but this can only be assessed after the project is complete.

Plato's skepticism about rhetoric survives in modern-day theory of meaning (at least in the Anglo-American tradition). Philosophers of language and (to a lesser extent) linguists often battle over whether something is *semantic* or *pragmatic* (as well as over different meanings of these terms). Grice's classic example involves a recommendation letter for a philosophy job in which one damns someone with faint praise, for example, by praising them for their handwriting. In writing "John has wonderful handwriting" in the context of a recommendation letter for a philosophy job, one semantically expresses a content about someone's handwriting and implicates non-conventionally, i.e., pragmatically, that they are not suitable for the job.<sup>70</sup> It is because of particular facts about the world, what we know about the practice of writing recommendation letters for jobs, that we can derive the intended meaning from the semantic content.

According to some theorists of meaning, showing that something is pragmatic is tantamount to rejecting its study as non-systematic, similar to the way that Plato described the study of rhetoric. In these corners of the theory of meaning, the goal is to show that a certain kind of phenomenon—be it metaphor, figurative speech, slurs, or propaganda—is "merely" pragmatic and hence not systematic. As in the above discussion of welfare, we take it as part of our task to argue that discourses as well as the linguistic properties of words are at issue here. Yet we are open to the possibility that the original terminology did not allow us to recognize important phenomena, so, we will not fuss greatly about what qualifies as semantics and what as pragmatics. It is not that we do not think distinctions matter. But we may have a heightened sense of why they matter to the phenomena we care about, in this case political speech, once we obtain a more expansive grasp of the empirical domain.

## 5. Plausible Deniability

It is, frankly speaking, something of a wonder that theories of communication have not focused more on communicative intentions that are deliberately masked or hidden. After all, people do not just wonder about such intentions in theorizing about political discourse. A common human experience is to have wondered what someone *really* meant when they said to us, "I love you." It is indeed, at least for many people, rare to leave a conversation without wondering what one's interlocutors "really meant," what the *real* communicative effect was supposed to be,

and whether any part of that was intentionally disguised. There is an obvious centrality to the hidden intentions behind discourse.

It is clear that the purpose of many conversations is to convey some non-explicitly delivered message. As is well known from pragmatics, we often intend for our speakers to work out or calculate what we actually meant from what we literally said. But we *also* often utter sentences with the intention of causing our audience to develop certain attitudes without being able to calculate from general principles of communication whether we *meant* them to have that reaction. One example comes from Saul's discussion of covert intentional dogwhistles. The whole point of words like "inner city" is that they are supposed to have a neutral explicit content. But it is not just dogwhistles that exemplify this kind of communicative plan. Take, for example, when someone says to someone else, "I'm not doing anything tonight." The speaker may mean to cause in their interlocutor a belief that the speaker is available for a date. But perhaps the speaker explicitly does *not* want their interlocutor to be able to calculate from general principles that they intended this. The speaker may speak in such a way as to mask that intention in order to avoid potential embarrassment. In such a situation, the speaker wishes to maintain *plausible deniability*.

The American politician who says, "There is a problem of laziness in the inner cities," uses the code word "inner cities" to convey a racist message about Black American citizens. But, as Saul emphasizes, it is fundamental to the practice of using racial code words of the sort involved in covert intentional dogwhistles that those who use them can plausibly deny that they intended any racial messages. Similarly, someone who speaks of "trailer parks" to convey a derogatory message about poor white Americans might deny they are so doing, by appealing to just the literal meaning of the term. Code words are precisely a class of expressions that are used to convey controversial messages while allowing the speaker to maintain plausible deniability over communicating that controversial message. More generally, in communication, we often seek to instill in our audience a belief, or perhaps just a *suspicion*, without having them "pin" that communicative intention on us. Perhaps you want your interlocutor to be plagued by self-doubt without having them realize that your assertions are, in fact, the cause. Or perhaps you want your utterances to manipulate your interlocutor into feeling positively about you without them realizing you are the cause. Literally expressing the belief you want your interlocutor to adopt in a sincere assertion, on the one hand, and on the other, uttering a sentence with the intention of causing your interlocutor to adopt a belief without having any sense of a connection between the newly formed belief and your intention, lie on different ends of a continuum. The idealizations of the contemporary

theory of meaning restrict our attention to one extreme of this continuum. These idealizations force us to restrict our attention to cases in which we either literally express the belief we want our audience to adopt or communicate that belief in a way that allows them to calculate our communicative intentions from the contents of our assertions and the contexts of utterance, while assuming that we are inviting them to make this calculation and attribute these intentions to us. In other words, the idealizations of contemporary theory of meaning restrict our attention to cases in which *there is no plausible deniability*. This is another needlessly restrictive idealization for the theorist who seeks to explain political speech or indeed human communication more generally.

## 6. Speech Practices

The historian Timothy Snyder has described Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin as engaging in a practice of *implausible deniability*.<sup>71</sup> Unlike *plausible deniability*, *implausible deniability* is when someone openly and obviously lies. By so doing, according to Snyder, Putin creates “unifying fictions at home and dilemmas in European and American newsrooms.”<sup>72</sup> Mocking factuality has not been something that western newsrooms have been prepared to handle.<sup>73</sup> The paradigm of a failure to use language correctly, according to standard theory of meaning, is to misrepresent the world, to lie. Given standard assumptions in theory of meaning, the only available critique of apparently descriptive speech that in some sense violates the function of communication is that it is a lie (or a mere guess). But when the western press repeatedly called Putin a liar, these charges lacked their expected normative effect. This fact suggests a certain poverty in a model of communication that focuses upon its function as information exchange.

If we think of the function of speeches in which Putin employs the tactic of implausible deniability as being to inculcate loyalty, we will have a better sense of why the charge of lying has been so ineffectual. The informational content of such speech is an obvious lie, one that is not expected that people will believe. The communicative act is intended to be a show of strength, to show how Putin can get away with obvious lies. The main point of such a speech is not to convey information; it is rather a kind of speech whose intentions are to *create loyalty* among his supporters and to *project strength*. Open defiance of the truth, bald-faced lying, is therefore part of a speech practice, one that is intended to convey strength and power.

The literature on National Socialism is clear about the importance of focusing on speech practices rather than descriptive content in under-

standing how National Socialist ideologists communicate. For example, Ernst Cassirer wrote in 1946:

If we study our modern political myths and the use that has been made of them we find in them, to our great surprise, not only a transvaluation of all our ethical values but also a transformation of human speech. The magic word takes precedence of the semantic word. If nowadays I happen to read a German book, published in these last ten years, not a political but a theoretical book, a work dealing with philosophical, historical, or economic problems—I find to my amazement that I no longer understand the German language. New words have been coined; and even the old ones are used in a new sense; they have undergone a deep change of meaning. This change of meaning depends upon the fact that those words which formerly were used in a descriptive, logical, or semantic sense, are now used as magic words that are destined to produce certain effects and to stir up certain emotions. Our ordinary words are charged with meanings; but these new-fangled words are charged with feelings and violent passions.<sup>74</sup>

Cassirer's point is that to understand what Nazism did to the German language, we need to recognize that language is not only used to describe. Language is also used to create "feelings and violent passions" and to instill a social identity. In order to see how language can do this, we need to look beyond the use of language as a device for communicating information. We need to think about how a discourse can fit into a speech practice that itself conveys information.

A single word can be an essential element of a speech practice. Penelope Eckert and McConnell-Ginet give as an example the word "jock," a focal concept in Eckert's earlier work:

The name *jock* points, then, to one important way in which school corporate culture constructs male dominance. The male varsity athlete is seen by the school institution as representing the school's interests, and this gives him institutional status and privilege.<sup>75</sup>

The word "jock" is part of a speech practice that represents a school in a certain way. By engaging in the speech practice that uses "jock" in that way, one is endorsing, whether consciously or not, the value system represented by this speech practice.

How can one be complicit in endorsing a value system without being aware of it? There are some resources in philosophy of language that can be marshaled here. It is a traditional view in the philosophy of language that we can use words that have certain meanings despite a large amount of ignorance about these meanings. A famous example that Hilary Putnam gave in his classic paper "The Meaning of 'Meaning,'" is that someone who cannot distinguish elms from beeches still uses "elms" to refer to elms and not beeches.<sup>76</sup> Philosophers of language widely

agree that social conventions link our words to their meanings in a way that allows us to use language to express meanings that, in some sense, can be opaque to us. We defer to conventions in this way even in judging the contents of our own mental states—that is, even as regards what we believe and intend. Tyler Burge famously imagined a case in which a man who, believing that he has arthritis in his thigh, is told by a doctor that arthritis is a disease of the joints.<sup>77</sup> Burge points out that the man is likely to take himself to have had a false belief, to proclaim, “I was mistaken to think I had arthritis in my thigh.”<sup>78</sup> We defer to medical experts even to characterize the contents of our beliefs; we take the doctor to be right about what arthritis is. Even what we *think* is determined by sources of authority outside of us (in this case, epistemic authority).

If we accept Burge’s conclusions regarding the wide content of mental states, then, in a sense, people might have beliefs that they do not fully understand but that may cogently be explicated by knowledgeable observers. And indeed, maybe this view is standard folk psychology: the idea of wide content could explain why so many of us are so fond of telling other people what they meant and what they think.

The philosophical insights of Putnam and Burge provide resources that help us to make sense of the idea that a speaker who falls into a certain kind of speech practice may unintentionally convey messages carried simply by the use of that speech practice. A rhetoric that involves references to “globalists” or “cultural Marxists,” who seek—via either capitalist or communist means—to usurp traditional hierarchies—for example, by encouraging immigration—will increase (one form of) anti-Semitism, even if the person who employs such rhetoric is ignorant of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*,<sup>79</sup> or even of any connection between Jewish persons and terms such as “globalist,” “cosmopolitan,” or “cultural Marxist.”

The fact that ways of speaking can affect audiences without the speaker being aware of them helps explain another puzzle that faces those who seek to explain the rhetorical effects of demagogues. Many successful demagogues are widely regarded as poorly educated fools. However, what we have said so far reveals a kind of fallacy in these discussions—what one might think of as the evil genius fallacy: only an evil genius can be a successful authoritarian. According to the reasoning in question, in order for someone to successfully pursue an authoritarian rhetorical strategy, they must be consciously aware of its authoritarian nature and purpose.

Some authoritarian leaders are almost certainly aware of the effects of their rhetoric. Take, for example, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán’s claim in a campaign speech in Budapest in March 2018, that



we are fighting an enemy that is different from us. Not open, but hiding; not straightforward but crafty; not honest but base; not national but international; does not believe in working but speculates with money; does not have its own homeland but feels it owns the whole world.<sup>80</sup>

It is dubious that he was ignorant of the way in which his words evoked anti-Semitic tropes. Debates about whether a particular demagogue is aware of the problematic effects of their rhetoric tend to be a waste of time. Nevertheless, the effects of rhetoric independent of the intention with which they are delivered are core data for non-ideal theories of meaning.

It is now easy to see the problem with the evil genius fallacy. If speech practices can convey value systems without the speaker being aware of them, then it is easy to envisage someone who naturally engages in such practices without being aware of their overall structure or significance. Someone may just be inculcated into authoritarian modes of speech, ones that structure the world into in-groups and out-groups, without being consciously aware of the links between the language they use and these value systems. Successful authoritarians, from Viktor Orbán to Idi Amin to Jair Bolsonaro, need not be aware of why and how they are successful any more than someone who uses “elms” and “beeches” to refer to distinct kinds of trees needs to be able to tell them apart themselves. On the other hand, feigned ignorance of the message of their ways of speaking is itself part of the repertoire of politics.

A speech practice frames the world in a distinctive way. A classic text on frames is Erving Goffman’s 1974 *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*.<sup>81</sup> The concept of a frame that Goffman employs is much larger than that of a linguistic frame: “Social frameworks . . . provide background understanding for events that incorporate the will, aim, and controlling effort of an intelligence” (FA 22). Goffman applies his more general concept of a frame to strategic political speech; chapter 4 of *Frame Analysis* is called “Designs and Fabrications,” and it is, in part, about political deception (see FA 83–123). Goffman clearly meant his work to include linguistic framing, and linguists have contributed valuable work to characterize the notion at issue.<sup>82</sup>

It is, we think, clear that some philosophers of language were exploring the concept of framing in their work in the 1990s, if not under that title. In *Frame Analysis*, Goffman defines pornography as “the scripting of sexuality that is ‘improperly’ explicit for the frame in question” (FA 55) and argues that legal debates about pornography involve *frame limits*, “limits concerning what can be permissibly transcribed from actual events to scriptings thereof” (FA 56). In the case of pornography, he describes these limits as follows:

Whatever the body can become involved in can be touched upon, but the view must be veiled and distanced so that our presumed beliefs about the ultimate social quality of man will not be discredited. The body as the embodiment of the self must make its peace with its biological functioning, but this peace is achieved by ensuring that these functions will be seen in “context,” meaning here as incidental to human social experience, not the focus of attention. Stories can call for persons to eat, make love, and be tortured, but as part of an inclusive human drama, not as an isolated display or a matter of interest to examine closely in its own right. (FA 56)

In her 1993 book *Only Words*, Catharine MacKinnon argues that pornography objectifies women.<sup>83</sup> In their 1999 paper “Scorekeeping in a Pornographic Language Game,” Rae Langton and Caroline West agree with MacKinnon’s view about these effects of pornography, but they persuasively argue that MacKinnon has not offered a plausible model of *how* pornography objectifies women.<sup>84</sup> On our reading of Langton and West, they think that pornography involves a frame that objectifies women. And their aim is to provide an explanation of *how* a frame can come to do something like this, using in large part resources of formal semantics and formal pragmatics.

Langton and West critique two ways of explaining how pornography could come to objectify women, both of which they attribute to different “moods” of MacKinnon (SPL 304–5). According to the first, pornography is “a process of conditioning” (SPL 304). According to the second, pornography “says certain things, and says them with authority” (SPL 306). According to this view, pornography literally states that women are objects. Langton and West reject both of these accounts of the mechanism by which pornography subordinates women, and instead they provide an alternative explanation. According to their alternative, “pornography introduces certain presuppositions about women” (SPL 313). Using David Lewis’ notion of accommodation,<sup>85</sup> they argue that an appreciation of pornography *requires these presuppositions*, and the relative powerlessness of women prevents its consumers from not accommodating these presuppositions, at least for the purposes of fiction (SPL 308–10). These presuppositions objectify women and hence silence and subordinate them.

What, in pornography, according to Langton and West’s account, “introduces certain presuppositions”? In their critique of MacKinnon, Langton and West are clear that these presuppositions are not expressed by any scene in pornographic films; the objectification of women is not explicit in that particular way (SPL 306). It seems natural to recast Langton and West’s view of how pornography implicitly presupposes or changes the audience’s presuppositions in Goffmanian terms: these presuppositions constitute a kind of frame that is required to view the

scenes in the way that is intended. The objectification of women in pornography, on this analysis, is part of the rhetorical frame within which the scenes of the film take place. According to this analysis, in order to understand the harm of pornography, it is essential to separate what is presented in individual scenes from the frame in which it is presented.

What we are suggesting is that Langton and West, in their account of the mechanism by which pornography objectifies, are appealing, at least tacitly, to the concept of a practice or the related concept of a frame. This is, as Tannen pointed out in the introduction to *Framing in Discourse*, a relatively novel tool or resource for linguists (as well as philosophers of language).<sup>86</sup> Langton and West not only appeal to somewhat different *resources* than the standard ones to explain pornography's objectification of women but they also appear to have a different explanatory *goal* in mind. In the majority of theorizing about communication in Anglo-American philosophy, the goal is to explain *what a speaker* said to their audience, and then, in the case of pragmatics, *what the speaker meant* by what they said. Capturing *what a speaker says* and *what a speaker means* are, roughly speaking, the traditional primary goals of semantics and pragmatics, respectively.<sup>87</sup> But these cannot quite be Langton and West's explanatory goals, as is obvious from the fact that their discussion is of *pornographic films and images* rather than speech. In the case of pictorial representation, including films, it is far from clear that we can even draw a distinction between what the film director said in a particular scene and what they meant.

Nevertheless, even adjusting for the difficulty of drawing a distinction between what is said and what is meant on the silver screen, it is quite clear that Langton and West have a different goal than explaining what is said and what is meant by a film director's pornographic film. After all, we can clearly imagine a clueless film director creating a pornographic film that objectifies women without intending to do so or even realizing that it was a possibility. And in any case, more generally, commenting upon consequences of speech that are neither said nor obviously intended is both normal and theoretically central to the project of understanding the political effects of communication.

Communication is essentially embodied: produced from a location by an entity with physical properties that affect the signal and have effects on the audience.<sup>88</sup> There is no sharp line to be drawn between these effects and the effects the speaker can potentially control. Langton and West identified the proper goal of a theory of communication that seeks to explain political speech, which is to study what we have called its *communicative effects*. In Langton's various essays, she employs the theory of presupposition to argue that the communicative effects of pornographic films, over time, draw viewers into a practice of subordi-

nating, silencing, and objectifying women.<sup>89</sup> In this paper, we have nothing to say about Langton's chosen example of pornography. We think Langton (and her co-author West) is right about the centrality of the concepts of the theory of presupposition to issues of silencing, subordinating, and objectifying. However, we feel that the phenomena to which they draw our attention require an adjustment to this framework, one that we seek to provide. One of the principle adjustments is allowing into the theory of presupposition the notion of presupposing a *practice*. On our reading of Langton's work, what she is proposing is that viewing pornographic films over time leads viewers to accommodate sexist practices. But this requires more revision in the theory of presupposition than Langton herself undertakes.

We are of course far from the first analytic philosophers and formal semanticists to urge for a need for models of communication to incorporate the effects of speech practices. There is an entire tradition in the philosophy of language that builds the theory of meaning firmly upon speech practices. Of course, this is one of the central points of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*. More recently, Robert Brandom's classic work, *Making It Explicit*, has centered speech practices on an account of communication.<sup>90</sup> Unsurprisingly, philosophers working in this tradition, such as Kukla, Lance, Tirrell, and others, have been sensitive to the importance of speech practices.<sup>91</sup> Kukla and Lance in particular urge philosophers of language, as we do in this essay, to pay more importance to speech practices that have an essential connection to social position (YL 3).

The goal of Mary Kate McGowan's 2009 paper "Oppressive Speech" is to describe oppressive speech practices. First, McGowan argues that oppression is a "norm-governed" or "rule-governed" activity (following theorists such as Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, we prefer the term "practice"<sup>92</sup>): "Since a system of oppression ranks people according to their membership in socially marked groups and since this ranking involves treating persons in some categories differently than persons in other categories, this system is clearly norm-governed."<sup>93</sup> In other words, oppressive speech is associated with a hierarchal perspective on the world, which reflects a value system. McGowan argues that speech of the sort we have been discussing—for example, in-group and out-group labeling—is an oppressive activity, as it is "one way to differentially treat people, and since it is one way to differentially treat people in virtue of a person's membership in a socially marked group" (OP 397). And such oppression occurs *covertly*, on her analysis, because of the nature of rule-governed activities:

rule-governed activities are such that what is permissible depends on the rules and what has already transpired in the rule-governed activity. Whether it is permissible to move your checker, for example,

depends on the rules of checkers and what has happened in the game so far (i.e., whether your opponent has just moved her checker). Similarly, whether it is permissible to start talking about mechanical pencils, for instance, depends on the rules of conversation and what has happened in the conversation thus far (i.e., whether mechanical pencils, or some related thing, is already a topic of the conversation in question). (OP 395)

A move in a practice can be expected to generate covert and indeed unintended effects because it “triggers the rules of that activity and thereby enacts facts about what is subsequently permissible in that activity” (OP 396). So, oppressive speech can have covert and unintended effects because it triggers a certain practice of differentially treating members of different socially positioned groups. She thus concludes:

saying something sexist subtly alters what is subsequently appropriate in the conversation at hand. Since a sexist utterance is also a move in the rule-governed activity of gender oppression, though, such a comment also subtly alters what is subsequently appropriate *outside of the conversation*. In virtue of enacting (potentially oppressive) [rules about specific types of action], such remarks actually enact part of the (constantly evolving) system of gender oppression. Clearly, sexist comments are not harmless banter. (OP 405)

Our enterprise depends on identifying not merely the hidden meanings in words but the hidden effects of communicative actions, such as enacting oppressive speech practices.

In a recent series of important papers, Elisabeth Camp has advanced the notion of a *perspective* as a vital and often overlooked element in the theory of meaning, one that underlies and explains the shape and form of speech practices.<sup>94</sup> In one of these papers, “Slurring Perspectives,” she introduces perspectives as “modes of interpretation: open-ended ways of thinking, feeling, and more generally engaging with the world and certain parts thereof” (SP 335–6). They are “ongoing dispositions to structure one’s thought,” to emphasize certain features rather than others, and “to treat some classes of features as more *central* than others” (SP 336). She concludes this passage by noting that “together, these structures of prominence and centrality make certain features and feelings seem especially *fitting*” (ibid.). Camp argues that slurs are semantically connected to perspectives: “by employing a slur a speaker signals a commitment to an overarching perspective on the targeted group as a whole” (SP 337). It is easy to see Camp’s notion of a perspective as underlying that of a speech practice in much the way that we have said that discussions of *frames* relate to speech practices. In fact, Camp makes these connections explicitly, arguing that frames give rise to, or provide for, perspectives in her sense.<sup>95</sup> This makes sense of the claim

above that speech practices have the *effect* of framing a discourse; if Camp is right, speech practices are the linguistic expression of a frame.

In Camp's view, perspectives—or frames in the sense at which we have gestured—underlie speech practices. On this account, a speech practice of referring to women primarily as “wives and daughters” stems from a perspective that renders “some classes of features more central than others” (SP 336). In other words, sexist speech practices are the *result* of an adoption of a patriarchal ideology or frame that makes certain properties—being a wife or daughter—seem more central than other properties, like being a person or a doctor or a lawyer. Kate Manne argues that “sexism should be understood primarily as the ‘justificatory’ branch of a patriarchal order, which consists in ideology that has the overall function of *rationalizing* and *justifying* patriarchal social relations.”<sup>96</sup> Sexism in this sense is a perspective in Camp's language, and sexist speech practices occur as part of discourses that attempt to rationalize and justify patriarchal social relations.

Perhaps one could proceed just with the notion of a speech practice, without appealing to perspectives or frames. This would allow one to evade taking positions in certain important debates. For example, one would not have to take a stand on the relative priority of perspectives and speech practices. Camp's work privileges dispositions to take certain mental attitudes, suggesting that speech practices are the outer manifestations of these mental attitudes. But one might also take perspectives to be in part *constituted* by habits and practices, including speech practices, as in the conception of ideology defended in the work of Haslanger, who argues that ideologies are in part constituted by “the tools culture provides us to think and act in coordination,” and that “we should adopt a ‘practice-first’ approach to these tools.”<sup>97</sup> Speech practices are paradigmatic examples of practices. Suppose we take perspectives in Camp's sense to be ideologies, which in any case Camp's work strongly suggests. Then the moral Haslanger is urging involves a serious consideration of the possibility that speech practices may not just emerge from perspectives; the order may in fact be reversed: they may help to constitute them.

Non-ideal philosophy of language as a project needs to take a stand on the relative priority of perspectives and speech acts. It may be that, as a Haslanger-type approach would suggest, a perspective is in part constituted by linguistic habits of behavior, namely speech practices. We are sympathetic to Haslanger's view that certain practices, including speech practices, partly constitute perspectives but do not attempt to substantively engage the issue here.

The aim of Camp's “Slurring Perspectives” is to show that slurs are a case in which these notions enter into semantics “proper,” and so even

if one's concern is, as it were, narrowly semantical, one must take perspectives seriously. The project of non-ideal philosophy of language, as we conceive it, is squarely in the tradition Camp has helped to pioneer—the tradition of calling attention to the problematic nature of idealizing away from notions like frames, perspectives, and speech practices, warning that

we employ a dangerously distorted model of what language is for if we focus exclusively on the exchange of proffered information while ignoring the multiple and manifest ways in which speakers intentionally manipulate associative and perspectival aspects of cognition in conversation, by inviting, cajoling, or berating their hearers into adopting their perspectives. (SP 344)

## 7. Gaps in the Ideal Theory of Meaning

Let us briefly review some of the examples we have discussed and draw out some initial lessons for a revision of the theory of meaning that refocuses it on political speech. In political and strategic situations, intentions are characteristically not transparent and manifest. Politicians often seek to attract votes by coordinating systems of value, employing speech practices to convey fear and gather support behind a social identity. In a liberal democratic society, in which politicians must send one message to audiences with widely differing value systems, political communication must involve a system whereby a single message can have different communicative effects on different audiences.<sup>98</sup> In one and the same message, such a politician must be able to signal to one part of the audience that they share their value system, while simultaneously concealing it from other parts of the audience that may strongly repudiate it. Code words and dogwhistles covertly communicate messages to some, but not all, audience members.

Our project is to investigate what happens when we refocus theoretical attention from simple fact-stating discourse, such as “the cat is on the mat” and “snow is white,” to political speech. What is the theoretical effect of this change in focus?

There are ten idealizations in the theory of meaning that we take to be most representative. But representative of what? Given the diversity of theorists and perspectives, many theorists would presumably deny many or even most of the idealizations we list. There are well-known criticisms of many of them. It is worthwhile listing them all together, not because they are equally widely shared or equally plausible. It is rather because these idealizations repeatedly arise, or at least (in the case of the most manifestly implausible ones) seem least problematic when one focuses on well-meaning, well-informed interlocutors using simple descriptive sentences in one-on-one interchanges.

Here are the ten idealizations:

**Dialogue:** The standard model of a talk exchange is between one speaker and one hearer.

**Cooperativity:** Speaker and hearer are cooperating with the primary goal of exchanging information in the service of a set of common interests.

**Rationality:** Interlocutors are perfectly rational; they are computationally unlimited and have consistent preferences.

**Transparency:** All relevant aspects of the speech signal and its meaning are readily accessible by all interlocutors. In particular, utterance meaning, including presupposition, is characterized by a unique set of mutually and consciously recognizable communicative intentions.

**Shared context:** Features of the context that are relevant to interpretation are known by all parties.

**Neutrality:** The basic meanings of words are neutral and aperspectival.

**Homogeneity:** We theorize about speaker and hearer without reference to social roles, affiliations, identities, power relations, or personalities.

**Language constancy:** Conventional meanings are determined at the level of language. Speech practices of individuals or sub-groups, and rhetorical frames of particular conversations are not part of the theory of meaning.

**Propositional uniqueness:** The locus of theorization is the individual utterance, which is taken to encode a single, definite proposition. Properties of larger discourses or temporally discontinuous exchanges or multiplicities of propositions conveyed within a single utterance need to be considered only by extrapolation from the single proposition or single utterance.

**Force uniqueness:** In producing an utterance, the speaker executes a single locutionary act that has a primary illocutionary force that is a function of the underlying content.

We find this list of idealizations helpful but not because there has been a lack of vigorous debate about, say, neutrality or propositionality; on the contrary, the literature challenging these ideals is vast.<sup>99</sup> It is helpful because these are the idealizations that naturally suggest themselves when philosophers of language are fed a certain familiar but overly restrictive diet of examples from which the theory of meaning is supposed to generalize.

The idealizations that constitute what we call “the standard talk exchange” in the theory of meaning clearly recognize a class of overt communicative intentions: these are preferences as to what information will enter the public conversational record, such that all interlocutors



and intended audience members will share knowledge of that information in the shared record and recognize the speaker's intention for it to be so shared.

The overt communicative intentions of a speaker are transparent to both speaker and audience (though not necessarily across audiences). But in addition to this, speakers have covert communicative intentions: intentions that the speaker specifically wishes to remain hidden from at least some audiences. Covert communicative intentions are transparent to the speaker and opaque to at least some of the intended audience. Any theory of political communication must be attuned to this second category as well, although intentions will not in the end play such a central role in our model as in much prior work.

Our preliminary discussion has also revealed that the theory of meaning ignores other notions that are central to it, such as speech practices: aspects of the social linguistic world that inform the speaker's choice of what is said and how to express it. These can be thought of as preferences but are normally not fully accessible to the speaker. In general, speakers will not be fully aware of a wide set of alternative ways of describing the world and so will not actively choose the value-laden way of describing the world. A speech practice constrains the set of options between which the speaker chooses. From among the available speech practices in their community, the speaker tries to optimize the utterance in terms of overt communicative intentions and covert communicative intentions.

One way to think of what we describe as the standard model is that it embodies an ideal form of communication centered only on overt communicative intentions—a form of communication that takes place between one speaker and one hearer when covert intentions do not exist, and when speech practices have no significant communicative effects beyond the transfer of asserted information. But it is just these elements left out of the standard model that help us to understand much of political speech. Understanding political speech involves speculating a great deal about covert intentions. To understand its effectiveness, it is essential to grasp what audiences understand from, for example, speech practices that reflect various social positions. Such messages go well beyond the descriptive semantic content of any politician's utterances.

We have two broad aims in pursuing the project of non-ideal philosophy of language. Our first aim might be described as theoretical, in that it bears on the structure, tools, and resources of the theory of meaning. The second might be described as practical, as it bears on what we hope to accomplish in terms of positive social change, whatever the fate of the theoretical inquiry.<sup>100</sup>

In the case of analytic epistemology, a diet of mundane examples such as “ $2 + 2 = 4$ ” has made certain otherwise ordinary knowledge states, like first-personal knowledge (knowledge *de se*) or knowing how, artificially mysterious. Here is an example: a standard retort to “intellectualism,” the thesis that knowledge-how is propositional knowledge, is that some knowledge-how is not capable of being verbalized, and that people often cannot linguistically explain the grounds for their knowledge-how.<sup>101</sup> Stalnaker responds by arguing that such arguments against intellectualism are problematically question-begging: it is only via a restricted diet of examples of knowledge ascriptions that the premises about knowledge required to support the counter-arguments are plausible in the first place.<sup>102</sup> Only if the examples are limited to sentences like “John knows that Berlin is the capital of Germany” would one come to the view that knowledge requires verbalizing such content and that justification requires being able to access and verbalize one’s reasons. In a similar way, by restricting the focus of the theory of meaning to mundane, apolitical examples, theorists may end up endorsing incorrect generalizations because the—often clear—counterexamples fall outside the restricted scope of standard evidence. Focusing solely on apolitical speech situations leads to conceptual gaps that leave us helpless when confronted with basic facts about political communication. We would like to expand the tools, resources, and problems of the theory of meaning by broadening the kinds of cases we consider.

We do not pretend to be able to predict the consequences of broadening the scope of the theory of meaning in the ways we have here described, but four options suggest themselves. The first option is that extending the scope of the theory of meaning may require no adjustment to the formal structures and tools or their interpretation; it will involve at most adding some new tools. The second option is that extending the scope of the theory of meaning may necessitate a new understanding of the formal structures and tools, but it will not require us to abandon them altogether. The third option is that extending the scope of the theory of meaning will lead to a dramatic reformulation and reimagining of the *theory* of meaning, so that previous work will have to be discarded. Finally, the fourth option is that extending the scope of anything like a theory of meaning to the phenomena we have discussed is impossible, that these phenomena are resistant to analysis by anything with the structure of a formal theory. If this fourth option is correct, then a theory of meaning that includes political speech is not possible. All that is possible are particular descriptions of practices in their historical contexts.

In semantics, many theorists are used to thinking of words as representations of objects, properties, and functions thereof. This approach disconnects the words we use from their *linguistic practices*. We can

use “dog” and “canine” to refer to the same species, but merely by using the different words we communicate different things. The standard way of thinking of words—as mere labels for kinds, static and disconnected from larger linguistic practices—prevents us from seeing the description of oppressive speech practices as central to the task of theories of communication.

Understanding what is happening in communication often depends on understanding the larger speech practice. The Hutu Ten Commandments, of the Hutu Power movement, speak of women chiefly in their role as mothers, daughters, and wives.<sup>103</sup> A use of “mothers” and a use of “wives” may be harmless in isolation, but in a certain context it may play a role in a linguistic practice with a predictable communicative effect (for example, suggesting that women are valued only insofar as they are wives and daughters). But it is not clear how to modify the structure of the theory of communication to account for this. Words, relative to a context of use, have a certain semantic content. The *linguistic* context is not taken to matter, with apparent counterexamples, such as anaphora, being the focus of much debate. This is because meanings are supposed to be static; the meaning of a term may depend (if it is an indexical, such as “I,” or “here,” for example) on extra-linguistic context, but it does not depend on its place in a discourse.

However, the notion of a practice is a diachronic notion; understanding what move is being made in a practice requires knowing what moves preceded it. Will adding such a notion to the theory of meaning be a radical revision of how we think about communication or a minor modification? When does something qualify as a radical revision of a theory? When does something qualify as a new concept rather than a modification of an old concept? Are these substantive judgments or merely semantic choices? What is the social meaning of making one choice rather than another? The decision between theoretical refinement and new theory is complex and partly political.

In this regard, feminists and critical race scholars have raised a worry to which we must attend. The concern is that the subject matter itself is resistant to the kind of abstraction constitutive of certain forms of theory:

The problem is not an absence of generalizations. Our diagnosis is that gender and language studies suffer from the same problem as that confronting sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics more generally: too much abstraction. Abstracting gender and language from the social practices that produce their particular forms in given communities often obscures and sometimes distorts the ways they connect and how those connections are implicated in power relations, in social conflict, in the production and reproduction of values and plans. Too much abstraction is often symptomatic of too little theorizing: abstraction should not substitute for theorizing but be

informed and responsive to it. Theoretical insight into how language and gender interact requires a close look at social practices in which they are jointly produced.<sup>104</sup>

It may be that the theory that is adequate to the description of speech as authoritarian (for example) involves detailed descriptions of background social practices. It is difficult to imagine explaining the appeal of modern day nationalist autocratic strongmen, such as Erdoğan, Orbán, or Bolsonaro, without appealing to patriarchal speech practices. If the explanation of gendered language requires a different, less abstract, more contextualized mode of inquiry, a similar conclusion would follow for any theory that is to be adequate to the task of explaining political speech. If so, using the kind of abstract, neutral, de-contextualized tools of formal semantics would obfuscate rather than illuminate.

Alice Cray has formulated a particular version of the challenge that those who pursue the project of non-ideal philosophy of language as we conceive it must bear in mind. In a recent essay, Cray calls for “methodological radicalism” in analytic feminism, particularly in analytic epistemology.<sup>105</sup> One aspect of what Cray means by methodological radicalism is the employment of “ethically non-neutral resources” in theorizing.<sup>106</sup> Another aspect of Cray’s methodological radicalism invites us to reject “as confused the idea that ethical and evaluative perspectives inevitably tend to distort our view of reality, but also to suggest that this idea itself does ideological work, delegitimizing cultural perspectives that contribute internally” to understanding.<sup>107</sup> Insofar as non-ideal philosophy of language as we conceive it employs the tools and resources of formal semantics, which are arguably ethically neutral, we cannot fully meet the first aspect of Cray’s challenge. On the other hand, perhaps non-ideal philosophy of language can be employed to support the other aspect of Cray’s methodological radicalism, which is that neutrality of perspective is conceptually and ideologically confused. If so, this could, to some extent, vindicate the use of the systematic formal tools of formal philosophy of language, by showing as it were that neutrality in the meta-language is consistent with a systematic lack of neutrality in the object-language.

The task of making philosophy of language more socially and politically relevant has seldom been more obviously urgent. We have tried to explicate obstacles, in the form of idealizations, that occlude the theoretical interest of political speech. Further, we have sketched some goals and key concepts that take as core evidence examples of speech that corrode democratic culture. Throughout we have relied on central insights in the ordinary language tradition in philosophy, which has provided us with a rich history of non-ideal critique upon which to build and a treasure trove of tools to aid in the process.

## NOTES

A complete first draft of this paper was presented to the undergraduate and graduate students in Jason Stanley's Fall 2016 Language and Power class at Yale University, and parts were presented in David Beaver's talks at the University of Chicago and University of Southern California that semester. This marked the beginning of our book project. We are grateful to the students in the 2016 class for their contributions in shaping the project at its earliest stages; to participants in the "Language, Power and Action" seminar Beaver co-taught with Hans Kamp in Spring 2017 at the University of Texas at Austin, most especially Anne Quaranto for discussion of dogwhistles; to participants in presentations in the talks at the University of Chicago and University of Southern California; to participants at later presentations in the 2017 Berlin Conference on communication, reasoning, and social epistemology, the 2018 Yale University workshop on Language and Authority, and the 2018 University of Cambridge workshop, Presupposition, Force and Social Norms. More recently, we owe a debt of gratitude to Alice Crary, whose extensive comments on the original submitted version allowed us to see a paper we had been working on intensely for two years in a new light and rewrite accordingly. Thanks also to Ceciel Meiborg for excellent editorial comments on multiple versions of this paper.

1. Robert Stalnaker, "On the Representation of Context," in *Context in Linguistic and Artificial Intelligence*, ed. Saša Buva and Megumi Kameyama, special issue of *Journal of Logic, Language, and Information* 7:1 (1998), p. 5.
2. Victor Klemperer, *The Language of the Third Reich: LTI—Lingua Tertii Imperii: A Philologist's Notebook*, trans. Martin Brady (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 15–6.
3. Charles W. Mills, "Ideal Theory' as Ideology," *Hypatia* 20:3 (2005), p. 169.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*
6. The centrality of the assumption of transparent speaker intentions is most obvious in Paul Grice, "Utterer's Meaning and Intentions," in *Studies in the Way of Words* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 86–116.
7. J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, ed. J.O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), pp. 1–4; henceforth HDW, followed by page number.
8. *How to Do Things with Words* discusses the idealization that "all problems [are] problems of 'locutionary usage'" and suggests it is a source of the descriptive fallacy (we are skeptical) (HDW 100). In Lecture XI, he again questions the primacy of stating (HDW 132–46).
9. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, ed. G.E.M. Anscombe and Rush Rhees (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1953).
10. Rigid ideas about ethnic identity were triggered and facilitated by mandatory ethnic identity cards that were introduced by the Belgian colonizers

in 1933, making “entrenched hierarchy possible” (Lynne Tirrell, “Genocidal Language Games,” in *Speech and Harm: Controversies Over Free Speech*, ed. Ishani Maitra and Mary Kate McGowan [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012], p. 179).

11. *Ibid.*, p. 176.
12. *Ibid.*, esp. p. 176.
13. Klemperer, *The Language of the Third Reich*, p. 154.
14. John J. DiIulio, Jr., “My Black Crime Problem, and Ours,” *City Journal* 6:2 (1996), p. 14.
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*
17. Statista, “Reported Violent Crime Rate in the United States from 1990 to 2017,” Statista: The Statistics Portal, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/191219/reported-violent-crime-rate-in-the-usa-since-1990/> (accessed October 10, 2018).
18. For a contemporary report on this phenomenon, see Robin Templeton, “Superscapegoating: Teen ‘Superpredators’ Hype Set Stage for Draconian Legislation,” *Extra!: The Newsletter of FAIR (Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting)* 11:1 (1998), pp. 13–4.
19. In 1994, Bill Clinton signed the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, United States Congress, 103rd Cong., 2nd sess., January 25, 1994. This included the creation of 60 new death penalty offenses, elimination of higher education for inmates, registration of sex offenders, and made gang membership a crime.
20. Margaret Werner Cahalan and Lee Parsons, “Historical Corrections Statistics in the United States, 1850–1984,” NCJ–102529, U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics (1986), p. 30.
21. John Gramlich, “America’s Incarceration Rate is at a Two-Decade Low,” Pew Research Center, May 2, 2018, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/05/02/americas-incarceration-rate-is-at-a-two-decade-low/> (accessed October 10, 2018). Although the title of the article appears to contradict this claim, the article confirms the United States’ high incarceration rates.
22. Jamiles Lartey, “By the Numbers: U.S. Police Kill More in Days than Other Countries Do in Years,” *The Guardian*, June 9, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/jun/09/the-counted-police-killings-us-vs-other-countries> (accessed October 10, 2018).
23. Laura Glowacki, “9 Reasons Canada’s Crime Rate is Falling,” Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, July 23, 2016, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/9-reasons-crime-rate-1.3692193> (accessed October 10, 2018).
24. Paul Waldman, “When Everyone Wanted to Be ‘Tough on Crime,’” *The American Prospect*, August 13, 2013, <http://prospect.org/article/when-everyone-wanted-be-tough-crime> (accessed October 10, 2018).

25. Donald Trump, "Bring Back the Death Penalty. Bring Back Our Police!," *Daily News*, May 1, 1989.
26. Ibid.
27. German Lopez, "Donald Trump Wants to Bring Back the 'Tough on Crime' Policies that Helped Cause Mass Incarceration," *Vox*, September 21, 2016, <https://www.vox.com/2016/5/25/11737264/donald-trump-criminal-justice-republican-president> (accessed October 10, 2018).
28. Donald Trump, "Democrats are the problem. They don't care about crime and want illegal immigrants, no matter how bad they may be, to pour into and infest our country, like MS-13," Twitter, June 19, 2018.
29. Eli Rosenberg, "'The Snake': How Trump Appropriated a Radical Black Singer's Lyrics for Immigration Fearmongering," *The Washington Post*, February 24, 2018, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/politics/wp/2018/02/24/the-snake-how-trump-appropriated-a-radical-black-singers-lyrics-for-refugee-fearmongering/?utm\\_term=.a6ac308122e8](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/politics/wp/2018/02/24/the-snake-how-trump-appropriated-a-radical-black-singers-lyrics-for-refugee-fearmongering/?utm_term=.a6ac308122e8) (accessed October 10, 2018).
30. See Caesar C. Aronsfeld, *The Text of the Holocaust: A Study of the Nazis' Extermination Propaganda, 1919–1945* (Marblehead, MA: Micah Publications, 1985), pp. 14, 17, 36, 38.
31. Nour Kteily and Emile Bruneau, "Backlash: The Politics and Real-World Consequences of Minority Group Dehumanization," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 43:1 (2017), pp. 87–104; henceforth B, followed by page number.
32. Geoffrey Haddock, Mark P. Zanna, and Victoria M. Esses, "Assessing the Structure of Prejudicial Attitudes: The Case of Attitudes toward Homosexuals," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 65:6 (1993), pp. 1105–18.
33. For a detailed description of the Ascent scale and its use in a study, see Nour Kteily, Emile Bruneau, Adam Waytz, and Sarah Cotterill, "The Ascent of Man: Theoretical and Empirical Evidence for Blatant Dehumanization," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 109:5 (2015), pp. 901–31. Here, they explain, "Our measure uses the popular graphical description of the 'Ascent of Man,' with five silhouettes depicting the physiological and cultural evolution of humans, from early human ancestors reminiscent of modern apes, through more upright ancestors with a capacity for primitive culture (depicted by a spear over the shoulder), to culturally advanced modern humans; participants were asked to indicate with continuous sliders their perceptions of the 'evolvedness' of a number of groups listed below the image" (p. 904).
34. For a discussion of this advert, see Doug Criss, "This is the 30-Year-Old Willie Horton Ad Everybody is Talking about Today," CNN, November 1, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/11/01/politics/willie-horton-ad-1988-explainer-trnd/index.html> (accessed December 12, 2018).
35. Rick Perlstein, "Exclusive: Lee Atwater's Infamous 1981 Interview on the Southern Strategy," *The Nation*, November 13, 2012, <https://www.thenation.com>

- ation.com/article/exclusive-lee-atwaters-infamous-1981-interview-south-ern-strategy/ (accessed October 10, 2018).
36. See Martin Gilens, *Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media, and the Politics of Antipoverty Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); henceforth AHW, followed by page number; and Tali Mendelberg, "Implicit, Explicit, and Counter-Stereotypical Messages: The Welfare Experiment," chap. 7 of *The Race Card: Campaign Strategy, Implicit Messages, and the Norm of Equality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 191–208.
  37. Gene Demby, "The Truth behind the Lies of the Original 'Welfare Queen,'" NPR, December 20, 2013, <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2013/12/20/255819681/the-truth-behind-the-lies-of-the-original-welfare-queen> (accessed October 12, 2018).
  38. Rachel Wetts and Robb Willer, "Privilege on the Precipice: Perceived Racial Status Threats Lead White Americans to Oppose Welfare Programs," *Social Forces* 97:2 (2018), pp. 793–822.
  39. Executive Office of the President of the United States, "Delivering Government Solutions in the 21st Century: Reform Plan and Reorganization Recommendations," June 21, 2018, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Government-Reform-and-Reorg-Plan.pdf> (accessed October 10, 2018).
  40. *Ibid.*, pp. 27–9.
  41. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
  42. *Ibid.*, pp. 27–9.
  43. Jennifer Saul, "Dogwhistles, Political Manipulation, and Philosophy of Language," in *New Work on Speech Acts*, ed. Daniel Fogal, Daniel W. Harris, and Matt Moss (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 360–83; henceforth DPM, followed by page number.
  44. Kimberly Witten, "Dogwhistle Politics: The New Pitch of an Old Narrative," (forthcoming), p. 2; cited in DPM 362.
  45. Martín Carcasson, "Ending Welfare as We Know It: President Clinton and the Rhetorical Transformation of the Anti-Welfare Culture," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 9:4 (2006), p. 655.
  46. John Wagner, "Trump Says 'He Wouldn't Be Surprised' if Unfounded Conspiracy Theory about George Soros Funding Caravan is True," *The Washington Post*, November 1, 2018, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-wouldnt-be-surprised-if-democratic-megadonor-george-soros-is-funding-the-migrant-caravan/2018/11/01/9ea196a0-ddcf-11e8-85df-7a6b4d25cfbb\\_story.html?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.d8e35465c302](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-wouldnt-be-surprised-if-democratic-megadonor-george-soros-is-funding-the-migrant-caravan/2018/11/01/9ea196a0-ddcf-11e8-85df-7a6b4d25cfbb_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.d8e35465c302) (accessed November 29, 2018).
  47. Jeremy Diamond, "Trump Embraces 'Nationalist' Title at Texas Rally," CNN, October 23, 2018 <https://www.cnn.com/2018/10/22/politics/ted-cruz-election-2018-president-trump-campaign-rival-opponent/index.html> (accessed November 29, 2018).



48. Danielle Wiener-Bronner, "President Trump: 'My Biggest Threat is the Fed,'" CNN, October 16, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/10/16/economy/trump-fed-threat-fox-interview/index.html> (accessed November 29, 2018).
49. One of the elements of the anti-Semitic preacher Father Coughlin's 1934 manifesto was abolishing the Federal Reserve (see Bradley W. Hart, *Hitler's American Friends: The Third Reich's Supporters in the United States* [New York: St. Martin's Press, 2018], p. 76). The Anti-Defamation League calls Jewish control of the Federal Reserve a "classic Anti-Semitic myth" ("Jewish 'Control' of the Federal Reserve: A Classic Anti-Semitic Myth," <https://www.adl.org/resources/backgrounders/jewish-control-of-the-federal-reserve-a-classic-anti-semitic-myth> [accessed November 29, 2018]).
50. See, for example, Timothy Snyder, "Hitler's World," introduction to *Black Earth: The Holocaust as History and Warning* (New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2015), pp. 1–10.
51. Robert Stalnaker, "Common Ground," *Linguistics and Philosophy* 25:5/6 (2002), p. 703.
52. Luvell Anderson, Sally Haslanger, and Rae Langton, "Language and Race," in *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Language*, ed. Gillian Russell and Delia Graff Fara (New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 753.
53. For an important contemporary statement of these Austinian morals, see Rebecca Kukla and Mark Lance, *'Yo!' and 'Lo!': The Pragmatic Topography of the Space of Reasons* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), pp. 18–22.
54. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2008), pp. 1–23.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
56. See Jim Sidanius and Felicia Pratto, *Social Dominance: An Intergroup Theory of Social Hierarchy and Oppression* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
57. For a comprehensive overview from over a decade ago, see Felicia Pratto, Jim Sidanius, and Shana Levin, "Social Dominance Theory and the Dynamics of Intergroup Relations: Taking Stock and Looking Forward," *European Review of Social Psychology* 17:1 (2006), pp. 271–320.
58. For a comprehensive review of the beginning of this program, see John T. Jost, Mahzarin R. Banaji, and Brian A. Nosek, "A Decade of System Justification Theory: Accumulated Evidence of Conscious and Unconscious Bolstering of the Status Quo," *Political Psychology* 25:6 (2004), pp. 881–919.
59. For example, Aleksandra Cichocka et al. connect the system justification theory hypothesis that political conservatives feel a need for structure and certainty with a preference for nouns over verbs and adjectives and argue that there is a correlation (see "On the Grammar of Politics: Or Why Conservatives Prefer Nouns," *Political Psychology* 37:6 [2016], pp. 799–815). (We do not mean to endorse their view that nouns correlate with "greater certainty" or definiteness than verbs and adjectives but give it just as an example of working research).

60. See for an older review of some of this research, Anne Maass, "Linguistic Intergroup Bias: Stereotype Perpetuation Through Language," *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* 31 (1999), pp. 79–212.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 80.
62. Shanette C. Porter, Michelle Rheinschmidt-Same, and Jennifer A. Richeson, "Inferring Identity from Language: Linguistic Intergroup Bias Informs Social Categorization," *Psychological Science* 27:1 (2016), pp. 94–102.
63. Rob Voigt et al., "Language from Police Body Camera Footage Shows Racial Disparities in Officer Respect," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 114:25 (2017), pp. 6521–6.
64. *Ibid.*, p. 6522.
65. Sally McConnell-Ginet, *Gender, Sexuality, and Meaning: Linguistic Practice and Politics*, with two chapters coauthored by Penelope Eckert (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 165–6.
66. See, in particular, Paul Grice, "Meaning," *The Philosophical Review* 66:3 (1957), pp. 377–88.
67. Tirrell, "Genocidal Language Games," p. 187.
68. Plato, *Gorgias*, trans. Donald J. Zeyl (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987).
69. The idea of placing language within the broader context of communication is explicit already in the work of Saussure, who was conscious that language "never exists apart from the social fact" (Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Wade Baskin, ed. Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye [New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1966], p. 77). He introduced semiology as follows: "A science that studies the life of signs *within society* is conceivable; it would be a part of social psychology and consequently of general psychology; I shall call it *semiology* (from Greek σημειον 'sign'). Semiology would show what constitutes signs, what laws govern them. Since the science does not yet exist, no one can say what it would be; but it has a right to existence, a place staked out in advance. Linguistics is only a part of the general science of semiology; the laws discovered by semiology will be applicable to linguistics, and the latter will circumscribe a well-defined area within the mass of anthropological facts" (p. 16). We do not attempt to draw out connections with semiology in Saussure's work and thereafter, or with the contributions of Peirce and the other American pragmatists. Neither do we examine the relationship between our enterprise and the contemporary, practically oriented field of communication studies, a field that by its very existence presupposes the cohesiveness of studying communication in all its forms.
70. Paul Grice, "Logic and Conversation," in *Studies in the Way of Words* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 33.
71. Timothy Snyder, *The Road to Unfreedom: Russia, Europe, America* (New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2018), pp. 163–94.
72. *Ibid.*, p. 163.

73. *Ibid.*, p. 164.
74. Ernst Cassirer, *The Myth of the State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1946), p. 283.
75. Penelope Eckert and Sally McConnell-Ginet, "Constructing Meaning, Constructing Selves: Snapshots of Language, Gender, and Class from Belten High," in McConnell-Ginet, *Gender, Sexuality, and Meaning*, p. 134.
76. Hilary Putnam, "The Meaning of 'Meaning,'" in *Language, Mind, and Knowledge*, ed. Keith Gunderson, vol. 7 of *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, ed. Herbert Feigl and Grover Maxwell (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1975), pp. 186–7.
77. Tyler Burge, "Individualism and the Mental," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 4:1 (1979), p. 77.
78. *Ibid.*
79. *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* is an anti-Semitic text that supposedly presents the minutes of 24 sessions in which major Jewish leaders are plotting world domination (see Stephen Eric Bronner, *A Rumor about the Jews: Reflections on Anti-Semitism and the Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* [New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000], p. 1).
80. Associated Press and The Times of Israel, "In Hungary, Pro-Government Weekly Prints List of 'Soros Mercenaries,'" *The Times of Israel*, April 12, 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/in-hungary-pro-government-weekly-prints-list-of-soros-mercenaries/> (accessed October 10, 2018).
81. Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974); henceforth FA, followed by page number.
82. See, for example, Deborah Tannen, ed., *Framing in Discourse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).
83. Catharine A. MacKinnon, *Only Words* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).
84. Rae Langton and Caroline West, "Scorekeeping in a Pornographic Language Game," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 77:3 (1999), pp. 303–19; henceforth SPL, followed by page number.
85. See David Lewis, "Scorekeeping in a Language Game," *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 8:1 (1979), pp. 339–59.
86. Deborah Tannen, introduction to *Framing in Discourse*, p. 5.
87. Many caveats are of course necessary here. There is a sizeable literature in philosophy of language on whether we should take the object of semantic theorizing to be an utterance, the act of uttering a sentence, or rather a sentence relative to a context. One argument, given by David Kaplan, in "Demonstratives," is that since utterances take time, and arguments need to be evaluated at the same time (relative to the same context), the project of defining validity for a language containing indexicals must take as its object sentences relative to contexts rather than utterances ("Demonstratives:

An Essay on the Semantics, Logic, Metaphysics, and Epistemology of Demonstratives and Other Indexicals,” in *Themes from Kaplan*, ed. Joseph Almog, John Perry, and Howard Wettstein [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989], pp. 522–3). If the project of semantics takes the form of a characterization of logical consequence, then Kaplan’s argument demonstrates that it is sentences relative to contexts that are its proper objects, and not utterances. However, one might question that semantics needs to take the form of a definition of logical consequence, i.e., one might question whether natural language semantics needs to be presented as a model of theoretic semantics (see Ernest Lepore, “What Model Theoretic Semantics Cannot Do?,” *Synthese* 54:2 [1983], pp. 167–87).

88. We borrow here from the large literature on embodiment in language, and cognition more generally. For an overview, see Lawrence W. Barsalou, “Grounded Cognition,” *Annual Review of Psychology* 59:1 (2008), pp. 617–45.
89. See Rae Langton, *Sexual Solipsism: Philosophical Essays on Pornography and Objectification* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), and “Beyond Belief: Pragmatics in Hate Speech and Pornography,” in *Speech and Harm*, pp. 72–93.
90. Robert Brandom, *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994).
91. In addition to the aforementioned classic “Genocidal Language Games” by Tirrell, see Cassie Herbert and Rebecca Kukla, “Ingrouping, Outgrouping, and the Pragmatics of Peripheral Speech,” *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 2:4 (2016), pp. 576–96; and Kukla and Lance, “Yo’ and ‘Lo’,” pp. 18–22.
92. Penelope Eckert and Sally McConnell-Ginet, “Communities of Practice: Where Language, Gender, and Power All Live,” in McConnell-Ginet, *Gender, Sexuality, and Meaning*, pp. 93–106.
93. Mary Kate McGowan, “Oppressive Speech,” *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 87:3 (2009), p. 397; henceforth OP, followed by page number.
94. Elisabeth Camp, “Slurring Perspectives,” *Analytic Philosophy* 54:3 (2013), pp. 330–49; henceforth SP, followed by page number; “Two Varieties of Literary Imagination: Metaphor, Fiction, and Thought Experiments,” in *Philosophy and Poetry*, ed. Peter A. French and Howard K. Wettstein, special issue of *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 39:1 (2009), pp. 107–30; “Showing, Telling, and Seeing: Metaphor and ‘Poetic’ Language,” in *A Figure of Speech*, ed. Elisabeth Camp, vol. 3 of *The Baltic International Yearbook of Cognition, Logic, and Communication* (Manhattan, KS: New Prairie Press, 2008), pp. 1–24; and “Metaphor and that Certain ‘Je Ne Sais Quoi,’” *Philosophical Studies* 129:1 (2006), pp. 1–25.
95. See, in particular, Elisabeth Camp, “Imaginative Frames for Scientific Inquiry: Metaphors, Telling Facts, and Just-So Stories,” in *The Scientific Imagination*, ed. Peter Godfrey-Smith and Arnon Levy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

96. Kate Manne, *Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 79.
97. Sally Haslanger, "Racism, Ideology, and Social Movements," *Res Philosophica* 94:1 (2017), p. 15.
98. In a recent classic of philosophy of language, Andy Egan provides many non-political examples—such as advertising billboards—of one message having different communicative effects on different audiences, and discusses how one needs to adjust standard theory to allow for this commonplace ("Billboards, Bombs and Shotgun Weddings," *Synthese* 166:2 [2009], pp. 251–79). Egan provides one example of how work considering only relatively familiar data can still challenge idealizations.
99. Both neutrality and propositionality are questioned, for example, across the vast literature on *de se* (first personal) states (see, for example, David Lewis, "Attitudes *De Dicto* and *De Se*," *The Philosophical Review* 88:4 [1979], pp. 513–43; and Roderick Chisholm, *The First Person: An Essay on Reference and Intentionality* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981]).
100. As feminist philosophers have made vividly clear, negotiating the theoretical and practical aims of a project such as this is always a complex issue.
101. The first published article we know of spelling out this objection is Stephen Schiffer, "Amazing Knowledge," *Journal of Philosophy* 99:4 (2002), pp. 200–2.
102. Robert Stalnaker, "Intellectualism and the Objects of Knowledge," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 85:3 (2012), pp. 754–61.
103. International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, "The Ten Commandments," §2.2.1 of The Prosecutor v. Ferdinand Nahimana, Jean-Bosco Barayagwiza, and Hassan Ngeze, case no. ICTR-99-52-T, December 3, 2003, <http://unictr.irmct.org/sites/unictr.org/files/case-documents/ictr-99-52/trial-judgments/en/031203.pdf> (accessed November 20, 2018), p. 46.
104. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, "Communities of Practice," p. 93.
105. Alice Crary, "The Methodological is Political: What's the Matter with 'Analytic Feminism'?", *Radical Philosophy* 2:2 (2018), pp. 48–51.
106. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
107. *Ibid.*, p. 48.