Chapter 9

The Structure and Dynamics of Context

We began this meander through the philosophy of language with a few general observations about the often invoked but poorly defined notion of context. Along the way we have encountered a number of instances where context has been taken as a fundamental component of theories of language and other instances where theories which were deliberately crafted to avoid or minimize any relativizing contextual influence nonetheless ended up implicitly relying on contextualizing mechanisms. I hope these encounters have highlighted both the range of linguistic phenomena which invite appeals to context and the methodological concerns which make appeals to context troubling. It is against such a background of critical concerns that we should best be able to judge proposals for a theory of context.

But even the possibility of a theory of context is not to be taken for granted. Recall the exchange between Benson Mates and Stanley Cavell mentioned in Chapter 7. Mates bemoaned the "wearying platitude that 'you can't separate' the meaning of a word from the entire context in which it occurs," and this led him to emphasize the importance of maintaining the semantics/pragmatics distinction (as Mates understood it), so that semantic theory could get on with its work. This sentiment has remained widespread since then. On the other hand, Cavell presented a different view of the task of philosophical inquiry about language, one identified with the Austin-Strawson tradition (but owing much, as we have seen, to an older tradition stemming from Peirce and revived by Morris and Burks). This tradition takes the study of context to be an inescapable and essential ingredient in any theory of language.

Cavell, for example, argues that Mates's pessimism in the face of the complexity of context is unwarranted and in fact belied by the way we language users actually behave. If we think of giving the meaning of an expression as giving instructions for its use (as even Kaplan, Quine, and many others now suggest we should), then a limited, manageable role for context emerges as a live possibility. Cavell says:

On Mates' description of what a statement of context involves, it should be impossible ever to make one. . . . Of course if I have to go on about [context] ad infinitum, I would not get very far with it. . . . But . . . giving directions for using
a word is no more prodigious and unending a task than giving direction for anything else.\textsuperscript{1}

Learning to drive a car, like learning to speak a language, requires attention to contextual factors. "Say if you like that these actions take place in infinitely complex contexts," continues Cavell, "but then remember that you can be given directions for doing either."\textsuperscript{2} The common features shared by driving and speaking, including structures of context-sensitivity, may have been obscured, he thought, by "a philosophically inadequate (not to say disastrous) conception of action."\textsuperscript{3} There has been, since Cavell's remarks, noticeable progress toward remedying this situation in the attention that philosophers have since paid to the theory of action (including linguistic action—speech acts). We will be able to draw on this body of work in describing context. We will also be able to draw on work focused more specifically on language acquisition, in which issues about action are merely implicit.

Kaplan's work suggests that although the study of context may be postponed for methodological reasons (as Mates urged), it \textit{must} eventually be faced—clearly definable contextual structures play identifiable roles in the \textit{conventions} of language, and so to dismiss concerns about context as "wearying platitudes," or to consign them to "the nether world of pragmatics" is to risk a seriously limited theory of language. As Cavell suggests, the way to make our theorizing about context manageable is to think of it on the model of descriptions of other actions with conventional and contextual influences. We will begin this task by examining the general features of language that characterize it as a particular kind of collective action—a \textit{practice}. We will then investigate what the functional details of \textit{social} practices in general can tell us about the human capacities and environmental constraints which form the context in which the linguistic practice of reference takes place.

This final chapter outlines a \textit{theory} of context in the following sense: first, I propose a set of distinctions among contextual factors or components, illustrated by examples and organized into a descriptive explanatory vocabulary; second, I apply this vocabulary in descriptions of context from different angles—ontogenetic, phylogenetic, and functional (touching on both structural and dynamic aspects); finally, I give examples of how this vocabulary can be applied to the semantics of individual indexicals. We can set the stage

\textsuperscript{1} Stanley Cavell, "Must We Say What We Mean?" \textit{Inquiry}, vol. I (1958), reprinted in \textit{Ordinary Language}, V. C. Chappell (ed.), p. 89.
\textsuperscript{2} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{3} Ibid., p. 96.
for this by glancing back at a few of the ways that context has, in the past, been pictured as contributing to natural language reference.

**Primal Scenes of Contextualized Reference**

Mill's account of proper names actually suggests two quite different pictures of how reference is achieved, each with different implications for what context might include. His robber example portrays the act of naming as establishing simple causal link between a name and an object to which it is "tagged." One contextual feature, in this picture, is the factual link (causal/historical) between a token of the name and the object named; but there are other less obvious factors. Remember, the robber's intention in marking the house was re-identification in service of another intention—robbing the treasure. The robber's mark is intended to distinguish the object "named" from all others, so that it can be re-identified. As with Kaplan's notion of a "vivid name of an object," Mill's robber needs a distinguishing mark on an object in order to fulfill his naming intention.

Let us see what we can glean from this first little picture of contextualized reference. First think about what it contains: one agent (the robber) with a forward looking intention (re-identification of the house) to be achieved by a relation between two things—a mark and an object. Explaining the meaning of the robber's action involves noting several factors besides the action itself—factors in the context of that action. First, we must note the motivation and the guiding intentions—to re-identify in order to rob. Fulfillment of these intentions is constrained by two other contextual conditions: that the mark be affixed to the intended object and that no other (relevant) object have a similar mark affixed to it. The important features of this little scene are: a) the solitary agent; b) the private nature of his intentions; and c) the plainly physical constraints on the environment of the action which are required for the accomplishment of those intentions. These features turn out to vitiate the analogy between the robber's chalk marks and referring expressions of natural language.

A noticeably different (and ultimately more useful) picture can be discerned, if only vaguely, in Mill's talk about what we mean by names and how we assign them—when we say, for example, "This is John." The scene that Mill evokes here, at the birth of a child perhaps, contains several agents who acquire and use a name together. It is the plurality of agents, using in common a single name, that distinguishes this picture from the scene with the robber. Mill may not have appreciated the fundamental difference this makes; the implications of this difference were left for others (e.g., Peirce, Frege, and Husserl) to work out.
With Russell we are back to the solitary name-giver; he evokes the picture of Adam wandering in Eden dispensing names to all and sundry. When inventiveness fails, Adam is allowed to fall back on 'this' and 'that', presumably because Russell sees the essential referential link as already achieved with demonstrative reference. And how is this link forged? Not by affixing physical marks but by the *selective acts of attention* of the solitary agent. Gone is any worry about enduring marks and their ability to aid re-identification. In Russell's picture, Eden is the mind and its inhabitants are ephemeral sense data, so that enduring name-relations are superfluous. The context implicit in this scene is impoverished in its lack of enduring physical objects (instead it involves a stream of experienced data); but it is enriched in a crucial addition to the agent—the ability to focus attention on an item of reference and to use this attentive act to form (and fulfill) an intention to refer. The robber's chalk has been replaced by an intentional act of an agent.

But this picture of reference is repugnant to common sense for two reasons. It (like the robber example) ignores the obvious social aspect of language, and it leaves the statements of science (not to mention more mundane empirical claims) without objective content. One response to this—a response traditionally identified with Frege—is to rely on conceptual rather than contextual resource to secure reference. Whereas sense data and acts of attention are private and subjective, concepts are public and objective. The picture of reference by purely conceptual means is most plausible when it involves abstract objects—e.g., the successor to the smallest integer, the orbit of a comet, or the line that joins the center of the one side of a triangle to the opposite angle. Let us take as our paradigm scene here the geometer working on a proof, or the astronomer calculating an orbit from a numerical table of observations. Here objects are referred to using unique conceptual descriptions. There is an agent in this scene, but this agent need not be situated in any particular way relative to those objects; the only constraint on the agent is the ability to grasp the same concepts available to everyone else. The whole point of this view is that the agent be Everyman and Everywoman—what is *referentially* relevant about the agent is not anything distinctive about him, but his using concepts which he holds in common with other agents. Reference is achieved, not through physical marks on an object in the environment or private attention to private sense data, but through manipulation of context-free concepts which are available to all and thus bring common objects within the referential reach of all. This is how, on this view, the objectivity of science and of language in general is to be rescued.

We might think of such referential acts on the model of dialing a number on a universal phone network—common access to common objects is guaranteed by the way the network
links numbers to individuals. If we think of the numbers as locational descriptions, and of each object as having a unique location, the analogy is complete. We may associate personal subjective thoughts and feelings with phone numbers, but the linking job is done impersonally and objectively. To make this scheme applicable to abstract as well as to concrete objects, we need only think of the former as occupying locations in a "conceptual space." It is, in fact, fairly plausible that a uniform system of concepts is what links us all to certain abstract objects—numbers, geometric forms, etc. But there are clear problems with including physical objects in this scheme. Empirical versions of "Frege's problem" indicate that there is something to be expressed about concrete objects beyond what is captured in our conceptual means of referring to them. This is illustrated by Frege's example of the astronomers discovery that "comet A = comet B"—presumably as the result of discovering that the orbit of comet A is the same as the orbit of comet B.

Consideration of the contextual influences on the meanings of data reports in the observational "Protokol" on which this discovery is based raises questions about the purely conceptual nature of reference to the comet involved here. In more typical cases of reference to sub-lunar objects, the problems are even more obvious. Typically we don't have enough information about an object to have anything approaching a unique conceptual designation; even in cases where we believe we do, our intention in many (de re) cases is not just to reach a particular number, but to reach that number in order to reach a particular object. This is the object-specific instrumental aspect of reference which is so well captured by Mill's robber example, but which falls by the wayside in a purely conceptual scheme.

Whether or not Frege himself ever held a full-blown version of this view, its basic structure is present in an influential and long-lived picture of reference: designation by means of coordinate systems. This picture is motivated by two things: the desire for the benefits of objectivity and equal access provided by a concept-based theory of reference and the recognition of the cognitive importance of connection to particular concrete objects. The idea here is that the actual practices of natural science demonstrate how concepts can provide formal structure which can then be coordinated to physical objects in the world. How this is presumed to work is clearly illustrated in Carnap's image of referring to a train station by means of a diagram which is formally isomorphic with the railroad system. Using the "phone system" metaphor we can think of ourselves as having the numbers of the nodes in the formal structure—they are wired up to take calls dialed in from anyone, anywhere. By coordinating nodes with concrete objects we can dial the node and get the object. Our modern experience with uniform systems of designation by month, date, hour
and minute, latitude and longitude, etc., makes this picture intelligible and appealing. Our confidence in the objectivity of this method comes from our confidence that we all use the same grid in the same way to locate objects. It is the conceptual structure of the grid and the open access to concepts that seems to insure this. Nonetheless, the worries that can be raised in connection with concept-based reference in general will eventually need to be faced by even the most sophisticated refinement of that view.

Quine has long thought of reference as linked to a kind of ramified, multi-dimensional coordinate system specific to a culturo-linguistic community—its conceptual scheme. Reference via one's conceptual scheme is to be thought of as objective in its link to observation and experiment, but still underdetermined by experience and so not universal. The theses of indeterminacy of translation across, and relativity of ontology to, conceptual schemes are closely connected to this picture of reference. Passing over, for the moment, familiar criticism of the coherence of Quine's notion of a conceptual scheme, it is worth noting that this way of looking at the link between language and the world has led Quine to develop an interesting method for thinking about the the interaction between experience and language. The method is to meditate on what he calls the ontogenesis of reference. We are to think about what is needed for a linguistic novice—a young child or field linguist—to work herself into a linguistic community so as to be able to use words successfully, e.g., for referential purposes. A progression of such Quinean meditations is to be found in Word and Object, Roots of Reference, and most recently in Pursuit of Truth. Quine's evolving story of the child's entry into language has become increasingly sensitive to the contextual detail required, for example, for ostensive/demonstrative learning of words and names; the way his story has changed over time is instructive. In Word and Object ostensive definition was recognized as an essential part of language learning, but the goal of Quine's project there was to provide a regimented language free of just those kinds of ostensive devices. Quine paints a picture of the child using ostension and other contextual means to scramble up out of the perceptually bound world of singular reference into the scientifically fruitful realm of generalization within a conceptual scheme. Mastering the conceptual scheme means mastering the general terms which express concepts; but this, Quine

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4 We will see below that a dynamic theory of context should be able to account for the phenomena which led Quine to postulate conceptual schemes while avoiding the problems endemic to that notion. A conceptual scheme will be seen to be a particular kind of complex context, evolving against a background of simpler contextual structures as the result of specifiable processes.
recognizes, depends on demonstrative references to instances of those concepts. How is a child to get started? Quine sees the bootstrapping this seems to demand:

Not only are general terms useful for their yield of demonstrative singular terms, but also demonstrative singular terms are useful in getting further general terms. Now this last is an understatement. Demonstrative singular terms figure even in the child's first acquisition of general terms: he has to learn of this apple and that apple, when to identify and when to distinguish. Demonstrative singular terms, though formed of general terms are thus needed in getting on to the trick of general terms. The general term, and the demonstrative singular, are along with identity, interdependent devices that the child of our culture must master all in one mad scramble.\(^5\)

Quine recognizes that in his way of describing the process, the "method of demonstrative singular terms" is "presupposed in what it presupposes."

Besides suffering from this circularity, this account is unsatisfying because it remains sketchy at just the most interesting parts. What is the basis for the child's "knack" with ostensive reference? What, if anything, does ostensive definition contribute to the transition from demonstrative reference to coordinate reference via the complete conceptual scheme? And what, if anything, of the dependence on ostension in the acquisition of a conceptual scheme remains a factor in the application and further elaboration of that scheme? Answering these questions is essential, though, if we are to evaluate Quine's ambitious claim that "all traits of reality worthy of the name can be set down" in a regimented language free of indexicals.\(^6\)

In *Roots of Reference* Quine revisits his strategy of genetic explanation, and gives an expanded version of the child's "mad scramble" into conceptually based reference. He seems to feel the need for a fuller explanation of how a child of our age enters into the scientific conceptual scheme which is ultimately supposed to provide all the referential resources required for "our evolving communicative purposes." Again the crucial role of context-sensitive reference in language and concept acquisition is recognized, but its role in mature language use is passed over without comment.

In *Pursuit of Truth*, however, Quine gives a welcome articulation of some of the contextual elements which continue to operate in even the most sophisticated activities of science. He recognizes that observation sentences—which are the "entering wedge" for

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\(^5\) *Word and Object*. p. 102.

\(^6\) Ibid., p. 228.
language acquisition, but are perpetually required as the basic evidence for science, and
which are inevitably illustrated with indexical examples—are best pictured as involving a
confrontation of several empathically attuned agents with an objective scene. In this
picture the objectivity of science is rooted in the same intersubjectivity as the objectivity of
language. Any observation sentence, such as 'That's a rabbit' can be learned in a situation in
which "we hear our fellow speakers affirming and denying the sentence on just the
occasions when we are stimulated in the characteristic ways, and we join in."7 But Quine
continues to suppress the referential aspects of these sentences signaled by the indexicals;
even predicational sentences such as 'This pebble is blue' are to be thought of as being, not
about objects, but about conjunctions of perceived qualities—'Lo, pebble' and 'Lo, blue'
focused on a particular part of a scene. Quine sees the reification implied in reference as a
derivative and inessential aspect of meaning and dependent on conceptually articulated
theory. The persistent attraction of the formal railroad map image remains: "Reference and
ontology recede thus to the status of mere auxiliaries. . . . Objects figure as mere nodes of
the structure." And yet the very notion of intersubjectivity to which Quine now appeals
relies on a commitment to the primitive status of certain objects which cannot be mere
nodes of a structure, because they are presupposed by the existence of that structure; these
objects are other subjects—"our fellow language users," or, in our preliminary terminology
of context, other agents. It is the presence of others in the context of early observation
sentences that makes them the entering wedge of language acquisition, and their continued
presence that provides the touchstone of scientific objectivity. We recognize others and
their "reinforcing and correcting" of our use of words; even in radical jungle translation we
must look for their "assent and dissent." We will soon see what contextual factors are
needed to explain these kinds of meaningful interactions.

Although the importance of intersubjectivity is not enough to make Quine concede a
place for reference to objects among the fundamental components of language, it is enough
to make him consider seriously certain contextual links between agents: recognition of and
empathy with others; common projects, such as "conversation and negotiation"; even
knowledge of the perceptions, beliefs, projects, and dispositions of others.8 His deep
distrust of intentionality is reflected in how he handles the role of directed attention—what
he calls "focus"—that comes into play in singular predications like "this pebble is blue."
Quine's explication of focus in terms of "the experience of tension in the eye muscles" is

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7 Pursuit of Truth, p. 6.
8 C.f. ibid., pp. 39, 43, 62, 64, and passim.
inadequate, especially in view of the unavoidable vagueness and ambiguity of any visual pointing considered from what Kaplan calls "the surveyors' point of view." The Gestalt nature of perception of objects (and of aspects of objects) demands an explanation beyond Quine's theoretical means.

We will, nonetheless, have occasion to refer to some of Quine's observations, e.g., empathy in ostensive reference and as a basic condition for meaningful language. And while the theory of context presented below is basically antithetical to Quine's results, it can be viewed as an extension of his method of genetic explanation—as a kind of "ontogenesis of context" designed to remedy some of the deficiencies in his story of the ontogenesis of reference. What is fundamentally attractive about Quine's method of investigating reference, with its attention to details of the language acquisition process, is that it highlights the ways language is integrated into the lives of children and adults (both scientists and lay-people); how it both shapes and is shaped by their interactions. We should expect that the mechanisms of reference are constrained and determined by the practical role they play in the lives of individual language learners and users. Before we describe how context contributes to those mechanisms it makes sense to have a clear picture of the general features that characterize language as a practical social institution.

**Language as Action and Practice**

It is now common to hear that the way forward for semantic theory is to focus on those features of natural language which constitute it as a practice—rule-guided social action. This is a natural outgrowth of the Peircean-Austinian idea that a theory of language must include an account not just of what expressions mean but also of how expressions are used. It has long been observed that uttering an expression for a communicative purpose is a prime example of an action, so it will be well to review what action theory can tell us about the basic features of linguistic action. But there is more to language that the sum of a set of individual actions. The social and conventional features of language mark it as belonging to a special category of actions—language, like organized political activity, and traditional musical and dance forms is a practice. It is in consideration of language as a

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9 The omission of Wittgenstein's name here, as elsewhere in this work, should not be taken as dismissive of the importance of his insights on these issues. On the contrary, this whole work can be seen as an elaboration of certain ideas of his, introduced in the *Tractatus* in terms of the "application" of language through "methods of projection" and later expressed in terms of language games. I have touched on this in "Hertz und Wittgenstein: zum historischen Hintergrund des *Tractatus*," *Conceptus* XXIX, 75 (1996), 205-227.
practice embedded in a social, cultural, and physical environment, that the full significance of context can be appreciated and evaluated. (This broad spectrum of concerns is just what Mates was afraid of—the slippery slope into ever larger contexts mentioned in Chapter 1; but I hope to demonstrate that his fears were unfounded.)

Howard Wettstein has been especially insistent that we think of language as a practice. His reasons are linked to concerns of direct reference theory with context-sensitive expressions. He begins from the claim that direct reference of names and indexicals, as described by Kaplan, is an undeniable semantic fact; but he then criticizes Kaplan and other advocates of direct reference for not going far enough in exorcising the remnants of Fregean "cognitive contents," which were a main target of the direct reference critique. Wettstein identifies the central thesis of indirect reference theories as the claim that linguistic expressions get their meanings (including their references) from associated representations—the prime example of such representations being Frege's 'senses'. But if direct reference is merely the negative claim that in some cases reference is achieved without the mediation of a conceptual representation, then a lingering Cartesian bias may lead us (he thinks it does lead Kaplan) to still allow questions of the cognitive significance of language (the role played by the meanings of these words in human thought) to exercise too great a role in our account of the semantic properties of language. He thinks a purified direct reference theory can best be achieved by establishing a positive claim about what does constitute the significance of language, independent of any representational or conceptual associations for any individual users. His claim is that "the significance of a piece of language is a function of its embeddedness in social, linguistic practice." As applied, for example, to names this means that the name 'Aristotle' "connects to the referent . . . in virtue of a communal practice of using this name as a name for him, and not in virtue of conceptual associations."

11 Cf. "Cognitive Significance without Cognitive Content," p. 430. There are serious problems with Wettstein's (now typical) understanding of Frege's related notions of Erkenntniswert ("cognitive significance"—better translated as "contribution to knowledge" or "epistemic value") and Gegebenheitsweise ("mode of presentation"—better translated as "way of being given" or "mode of givenness"). These interpretive issues are discussed above in Ch. 4.  
12 Ibid., p. 431.
Wettstein sees the representational semantics that he rejects as growing out of an initially plausible claim that we can neither think about an object nor refer to it without having some kind of "cognitive fix" on that object. But he argues that when we look at reference as a social practice it is clear that we often do in fact refer to objects in the absence of the supposed cognitive fix. He cites a number of familiar examples: Kripke's contention that people can use 'Cicero' to refer while having only the vaguest notion, and certainly no distinguishing notion, of who Cicero was; Kripke's further suggestion that someone can use 'Gell-Mann' and 'Feynman' to refer to distinct "famous physicists" while holding only this one vague belief about them both; Putnam's contention that natural-kind terms such as 'elm' and 'beech' can be used to refer to distinct determinate classes of trees without the user having any distinguishing beliefs about, or any other cognitive fix on, those trees. Finally, he considers the case of a student who connects the name 'Aristotle' with distinguishing beliefs about Plato. The student's answers on a test are marked "wrong" because, in spite of the "cognitive fix" which he attaches to it, his use of 'Aristotle' on the test refers to Aristotle, not to Plato.

What connects the student's utterance to Aristotle is not the student's cognitive fix on Aristotle. What connects utterance to referent is rather the fact that the student is using a linguistic device that, as our social practices go, refers to Aristotle.14

Thus, it seems, semantic meaning comes unstuck from a speaker's intentions and thoughts. We can refer without knowing what we are referring to, and we can refer to one thing when we think we're referring to something else. We can refer selectively to each of two things without being able to tell them apart. This is to be explained, Wettstein thinks, by the fact that referring is not essentially a solitary pastime but rather a practice.

To clarify some implications of this claim let me suggest an analogy. Consider the practice of competitive archery—target-shooting with bow and arrow. Within this practice there is a standard of success—hitting the bull's-eye. This is analogous to the linguistic standard of successfully referring to someone. One might think that target-shooting essentially involved private intentions and epistemic states—hitting the target, one might think, depends on aiming at the target, and that this in turn requires perceiving and

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13 He summarizes his view—the rejection of the "Cartesian intentionality intuition"—as the claim that linguistic contact with things (i.e., reference), does not presuppose epistemic contact with them (i.e., discriminating knowledge).

14 Ibid., p. 440.
knowing where the target is located and intending to shoot in that direction. However, examples analogous to Wettstein's could be used to argue that target-shooting, considered merely as a social practice, can be explained without making reference to these internal states—the "cognitive fix" the archer has on the target. Consider the following situations:

a) The archer accidently lets go of the arrow but nonetheless hits the target.
b) An archer with poor vision sees only a fuzzy image, but still hits the target.
c) Imagine that the contest involves shooting, in sequence, at a series of targets.  c-1) The archer may aim at target #1 and accidently hit target #2, and thus fail to score; c-2) the archer might mistakenly aim at target #2 but actually hit target #1 and so score in spite of her mistake;
d) the archer might be "seeing double" and so not be able to tell which of two targets she is aiming at, and yet, if the correct target is hit, still score.

In all these cases the archer's visual connection to, belief about, and intention toward a specific target is irrelevant to the decision about whether she succeeded in scoring a hit. So doesn't this show that target-shooting, looked at as a social practice, can be understood without any reference to the cognitive states of the archers involved? I think it does not show this, and the first step toward seeing why is to ask what, if not the archer's cognitive states, is relevant to determining success in this practice? It lies, roughly speaking, in certain aspects of the context in which the archer's actions take place.

Consider, for example, how scoring is done. Presumably a judge or a panel of judges determines, by some procedure, what is a hit and what is not, according to their understanding of the rules or customs of the practice of archery. But what would happen if some or all of the judges share the archer's visual or doxastic aberrations? Does judging not require some kind of perceptual and cognitive fix on the target? Certainly having a panel of judges reduces the chances of mistaken or idiosyncratic cognitive states affecting the scoring results, but it does this by allowing the judges to reinforce or cancel out each other's cognitive processes, not by eliminating the need for those processes, or making them irrelevant. When we begin to look at the details of actual human social practices it is far from clear that a simple appeal to "practices" has absolved us from the need to explain the intentional and cognitive processes on which those practices depend. It does, however, shift the focus from the private states of a single individual language user to the intersubjective states of a community of language users.

So, is the only problem that we have been focused on the cognitive states of the archer when what is important are the cognitive states of the judges? Not quite. That the practice unavoidably involves public comparison of judgments based on private thought processes
(as exemplified by the part played by judges in archery) is part of the story but not the whole story.

Another way to approach this problem, as Wettstein himself suggests, is to think of language use (or archery) as it would appear to an "anthropologist from Mars." What would be required for a Martian to understand a human social practice? In the case of archery, it is important that the Martian realize that the archers are not just being randomly given trophies after their random motions happened to land arrows in random spots. Part of what the practice involves is that some shots are better than others, and those are the shots, which, by and large, are rewarded. And why are they better? Because they are the ones that land where they are supposed to.

The practice is social to the extent that there is agreement among those involved (both archers and judges) as to where a given arrow is supposed to land. It is against this background that it makes sense to talk about the archer aiming at (or failing to aim at) the target, and hitting (or missing) the target. Until the Martian has understood the shared structure of intention and value, and its relation to the actions of those involved, he has not understood the practice of archery.

Of course the examples above show that the match between individual cognitive states and the public proceedings of the practice is not always perfect—the arrow doesn't always go where it is aimed, and the archer and the judge may disagree about which target is the target. And sometimes random shots do hit the bull's-eye. But those examples, together with what we know of the practice of archery, also show that these aberrations always involve some kind of mistake, failure, or inability to fulfill an intention when judged against some (socially defined and enforced) standard. And this standard unavoidably involves both contemporaneous cognitive processes of other agents (e.g., the judges) and previous cognitive processes of those agents and of the archer herself. Before someone can make a mistake in a practice she must first have learned how to participate in that practice.

Missing the mark only makes sense when you first know what it means to hit the mark.

I will try to show that the same pattern—the dependence of "aberrant performance" (where public results don't line up with private cognitive expectations) on "normal performance" (where they do line up) through which one learns a practice—is also to be found when we examine the details of the practice of referring to things with language. This will become clear when we see how an analysis of practices grows smoothly out of some well known features of the theory of action.

A Theory of Meaning Within a Theory of Action and Practice
As I have been telling the story of the theory of indexicality and context, it falls within a process of theorizing, an evolving problematic, which begins with a simple insight of Mills—that we use proper names to achieve practical goals in much the same way a robber might use a chalk mark to achieve his goal. The analogy between the two cases seemed to lie in the object-specific nature of the goal involved. In the general case, Mill held that our goal in using language is to speak about objects, and we attempt to achieve this goal by using names (and indexicals) with the intention to refer to objects rather than to our ideas of objects. Russell, without disputing that such are indeed our goals in language use, questioned whether we can ever achieve them. Frege thought that we can indeed achieve objective reference, but not by the contextually concrete means which Mill's examples suggest. The traditions growing out of the work of Russell and Frege, are oriented, not toward explaining the uses of language to achieve practical goals, but toward explaining the intrinsic features of language—its structure and its meaning (eventually thought of as truth-conditional relations among expressions)—while avoiding questions about how language is used. Peirce, on the other hand, elaborated on Mill's insight, and developed a view of language which kept language use as its central organizing principle, while demonstrating how to build complementary accounts of syntax and meaning. Peirce showed how to give a theory of linguistic meaning within a theory of linguistic use, which was, in turn, part of a comprehensive theory of human action. The theory of action gives us basic concepts for understanding the relation between goals and our means for achieving them. The theory of language (contained, as Peirce suggests, within a theory of signs) deals with the specifically linguistic means for achieving non-linguistic goals. These emerge as crucial in the account of context in linguistic practice.

**Actions and Chains of Actions**

'Action' in the relevant philosophical usage, refers to a specifically human kind of event. D. W. Smith summarizes crucial aspects of action as follows:

My action of [for example,] digging consists in the complex process or event that involves: (1) the digging itself, i.e., my bodily movement plus the movement of the shovel in my hands and the earth in the shovelhead; (2) my volition in digging, i.e., my willing "that I dig here by moving this shovel [in a certain way] with my hands and arms" . . . ; (3) the causal relation between my volition and my digging movement; and (4) the intentional relation between the volition and the action, i.e., my volition's willing, or being a volition 'of' my digging. The relationship between movement and volition in action is thus quite involved. Not only is the movement
both caused and willed by the volition, but as noted, the causation is part of what is willed.\textsuperscript{15}

What is important for our purposes is that in regard to any action we can distinguish 1) a \textit{goal}, purpose, or intention, at which the action is directed and 2) a physical process, motion, or state which is the \textit{means} by which the intention is to be fulfilled. Human actions are typically complex, arising from complex intentions, and often involving sub-actions, with their own movement/intention or means/goals structure. For example, Mill's robber performed the action of chalking the house, which involved the movement of rubbing chalk on the wall, for the purpose of leaving a distinctive visible mark. This action was an instrumental part of a larger action of robbing the house, which involved any number of other actions, each with its own motion and sub-goal. Perhaps robbing the house was in the service of an even broader intention—e.g., financing a political career—and so forth. In characterizing certain types of action, we may need to describe both the lower level "instrumental actions" and the larger "primary" action to which they systematically contribute. We can, accordingly, distinguish primary goals and means from instrumental goals and means. 'Primary' and 'instrumental' are relative terms, and there is nothing to prevent an act being viewed as primary for one purpose and instrumental for another. What is important in an explanation of a particular kind of purposeful action is to be able to identify the characteristic properties of certain movements which allow them to serve given intentions, whether directly and indirectly.

This becomes especially clear when we view \textit{language} use as a kind of action. Obviously we often use language as a means to achieve a non-linguistic intention—ordering pizza, reporting an accident, etc. When we report an accident to 9-1-1 we perform an action which makes use of the telephone and of the English language. When we use English to communicate that message, we perform a sub-action; the means by which we achieve this purpose involves performing a series of finer-grained sub-actions, e.g., saying a series of words in such a way as to be understood to be communicating that message. Communicating a message may also involve some non-linguistic sub-actions, such as gesturing or modulating one's voice. A complete description of the communicative action will require describing the sub-actions and the way they are interrelated to achieve first, the linguistic, and then the overall goal.

Peirce's pragmatic semiotics pioneered the investigation of some of these complex interconnections between language use and human activity in general, but every major philosopher of language has added to our understanding of the nature of linguistic action. Speech act theory and Grice's analyses of the intentions of speakers in conversational situations have made obvious contributions, but so has Carnap's concerns with the connection between syntactic structures and the scientific uses of language, etc. Many of those contributions will be obvious in the presentation below.

A few terminological distinctions will aid our description of context. We have already begun to speak of linguistic activity, as well as linguistic action. 'Action' in its most basic relevant sense here applies to individual intentional acts of individual agents. It can also be used as a mass-term to cover the whole range of intentional human behavior—an aggregate of individual actions. But actions don't just aggregate in formless heaps; they cluster in regular ways, and we need a vocabulary to talk about those ways. Let us use 'activity' to speak about relatively brief, organized clusters of actions aimed at an immediate short-term goal. Some activities—picking and eating an apple, or going for a walk—will involve only a single agent, while others—learning or using a language—will be socially interactive. Thus we can speak of solitary activities and social activities.

But activities themselves cluster into larger units. When we begin to examine the acquisition of language, we see that an especially relevant part of the child's cognitive repertoire is the ability to engage in longer and more complex chains of actions—what we might call projects. A project, let us say, is a string of coordinated intentional activities directed at goal; what makes projects important is that they display the means/goal relations which come into play in many contextualized uses of language. In particular, they show how objects and activities which have no intrinsic value to an individual may acquire instrumental value in carrying out complex chains of activities. Communication, as we will see, is almost always a project in this sense; it typically involves establishing certain contextual structures as a common base between agents (what information theory calls "channel conditions") before actual communication can begin. As we shall see, these specifically linguistic projects display an intentional structure which is already available to the child as a prerequisite for learning language. Again, we can speak of solitary projects and social projects.

The characterization of language use as a kind of action, activity, or project is, however, just the beginning, since there are features of language use which distinguish it from many other kinds of actions. Most notably, language use is an essentially social action; it depends for its meaning on the cooperation and collaboration of a group. Language use is never just
an action undertaken by an individual; it is inescapably part of a practice engaged in by and within a group. To these additional characteristics which make an action part of a practice we now turn.

**Linguistic and Non-linguistic Practices**

As we have seen, Howard Wettstein has suggested that any adequate discussion of reference should begin with the description of linguistic practices as empirically observable social phenomena. Obviously the notion of a practice is connected in some way to the notion of action—participating in a practice involves performing certain kinds of actions. Nonetheless, not all human actions are parts of practices—my digging in the yard is not—so a careful distinction must be made between the two. In particular, using language to refer is a practice which involves certain actions (e.g., saying a name, or saying 'that' while pointing at an object), but it has a social dimension which goes beyond those actions. It is this additional dimension which makes a collection of actions into a practice we need to carefully sort out. We have already noted several of the ways that intentions play a role in language use, especially referential uses. Because practices are made up of intentional actions, general constraints on intentions built into the nature of practices as such may illuminate the nature of linguistic practices. Thus it will help to see how various intentions are interrelated within the general structure of practices.

We can begin by asking what distinguishes the intentionality of actions involved in a practice from the intentionality of actions which are not. Let's reconsider the target-shooting example. There is a kind of action called shooting an arrow, and a slightly more complex action of shooting an arrow at something. Then there is the practice of target-shooting as an organized, possibly competitive, social activity. Target-shooting involves the actions of shooting, and shooting-at, but it involves something more in addition—prearranged targets, judges, standards, rewards, opponents, taking 'turns', etc. This "something more" amounts to a social ontology of objects and properties (including values), and agent roles involving status, powers, shared intentions, and shared perceptual and behavioral training and expectations. It seems natural to say that these are features of the context in which the action takes place and which constitute it as a practice.

Now think of what it means to say that using language is a practice. We can ask what actions are involved, and then ask what additional features are required to make those actions part of a linguistic practice. The actions will include making certain sounds, marks, and gestures, and will involve certain physical objects including persons. The additional features required by the practice of language will include many of the things we have
tentatively identified as components of context in earlier chapters. Taken together they constitute an interpersonal ontology of agent roles, values, shared intentions, common acts of attending, empathy, etc. Thus in spelling out the contextual structure required for indexical reference, we are laying the basis for an account of language-as-practice which should meet with even Wettstein's approval. But it is an account which incorporates, rather than shuns, individual and interpersonal intentional states (whether these are best thought of as "cognitive states" or "cognitive fixes on objects" can be left for others to decide).

**Two More "Scenes of Reference"**

Considering language as a complex social practice in which individuals work together to achieve common goals prepares us to view reference in a new light. Let us recall another "primal scene" of reference which we have met before. Peirce described reference in terms of two-agent situations: the man on the seashore pointing out to sea and referring to "that ship" which his companion could not make out; the traveler on the road pointing and referring to "that house." What distinguishes this kind of scene from the others we have been considering is: (1) the interpersonal element; (2) the important role of perception of a common environment; and 3) a common history of practices that allowed one agent to draw the other's attention to a particular object in the perceptual environment and then refer to that object. (This kind of scene displays what Davidson has called "triangulation"—two agents focusing on a common object; they are also reminiscent of Husserl's notion of people interacting linguistically within a shared "life-world.")

These scenes are necessarily more complex that those mentioned above, but perhaps they can be made a bit simpler without losing their special features. Following Quine's lead in investigating the ontogenesis of reference, let us try to identify the *simplest possible* scene of demonstrative reference—one at the very beginning of the process of learning language—in order to isolate the absolute minimum of contextual requirements for indexical reference. Let us consider the interactive infant or toddler as he comes to master the practice of reference for the first time. As a first approximation, think about this simple triangular scene: a parent and a child are looking at some motivationally neutral third thing—say a cow or a picture of a cow; the child is in the process of learning a use for 'cow' or 'moo'. In terms of this scene we can inquire what contextual ingredients might be involved in the child's coming to understand that "that is a cow." In so doing we will uncover clues to an important dimension of language acquisition: a *contextualizing capacity* which allows the child entrance to the collaborative, conventionalized practice of language.
This capacity is presupposed by the "observation sentences" which Quine calls the "entering wedge into language," and without this capacity that wedge cannot function.

Components of (Simple) Context

There is an impressive body of research on the early stages of language acquisition and cognitive development which we can draw on in outlining the characteristic contextual features of the earliest acts of reference. In Chapter 1 I cited developmental psychologist Jerome Bruner's suggestion that human cognition is best viewed as the creation of meaning within a cultural context. Now we can profitably return to the kinds of studies he used to illustrate the development of the specific "sensitivity to context" which he claims is essential to the language acquisition process. The way this research fills in the details of our "minimum scene of reference" is clear in the following summary from a recent textbook in developmental psychology:

The reference function requires the joint attention of two individuals (Bruner, 1983). Early joint attention develops around two months of age when eye-to-eye contact is established between mother and infant. Mothers use this attention to present objects, often with vocal comments, in their infant's line of sight. The infants then direct their attention to the object. Mothers and babies develop stable patterns of give and take in the next few months. During these episodes infants spontaneously switch attention between the object and their mothers, and this visual attention is accompanied by vocal and/or other behaviors (Bruner, 1975; Gray, 1978) By 8 to 10 months of age, an infant will follow a mother's line of gaze when she looks away from the infant. Around a year of age, infants use pointing, often with vocalizations, to direct attention to objects. This pointing is used to draw attention to objects of interest, rather than to request objects. . . . Indeed, the development of early vocabulary (at 21 months) is positively correlated with the mother's naming of objects during episodes of joint attention (Tomasello & Farrar, 1986).¹⁶

With these kinds of empirical observations as a guide, let us use our little nursery scene to begin a catalogue of the components of the contexts required for the first learning of language. Children do not learn language on their own, so a context for language learning must contain at least two agents. But even children in social environments do not learn language if they lack certain cognitive capacities, so the agents of any context can be further specified as agents with certain abilities. (These abilities may, of course, be thought of as rooted in basic neurobiology, though their complexity will make any foreseeable neurological description unenlightening.) We are especially interested in the abilities that aid in the establishment of reference supporting connections among potential communicators.

Even in animals we can identify innate abilities to form bonds with co-specific individuals: newborn ducks imprint on other ducks but flee from shadows of hawks. In human infants, there is strong evidence that they normally have the ability to identify other agents from the moment of birth. Researchers studying the reactive capacities of newborns have repeatedly observed an uncanny ability to identify a human face, to focus attention on that face, and then, most surprisingly, to imitate facial expressions made by that face—the experimenter sticks out her tongue and the infant responds by sticking out his. Here we have evidence of another essential building-block of language acquisition: the ability to interact imitatively with another agent.

Such observations make it safe to assume that the child comes to the language acquisition process with the ability to identify other potential language users, and the ability (and motivation) to interact with them—specifically to imitate them. But there is more to language than imitation. Just as Chomsky's arguments show the need for a grammatical capacity to explain the novelty of language production, we should be on the lookout for skills that allow the child to become a creative partner in collaborative uses of language.

One such ability that develops very early is the already mentioned ability to focus on a common object of attention with another agent. The parent turns to inspect a toy or a picture and the infant turns his gaze to the same object (not in the same direction—which would constitute mere imitation—but in the direction which triangulates on the object of the parent's attention). Here we have advanced from imitation to collaboration; the child

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17 Fred Dretske considers the contributions to language of the "appropriate sensory capacities," including the power to discriminate certain important kinds of objects, and how these capacities form an explanatory background for a theory of meaning for natural language. See Explaining Behavior, p. 47.
uses different behavioral means to achieve the same perceptual goal—to see what the parent sees. This collaboration, it should be noted, involves a kind of practical empathy in noting the parent's point of view and then adjusting for a different line of sight. At about this same time (8 to 10 months) two other important developments occur. First, children begin what psychologists call "social referencing"; they look to the facial expressions and vocal tones of others to gauge their affective reactions to environmental situations and then they adjust their own evaluations of those situations to match. If the parent is pleased, the child becomes pleased. In this way children begin to perceive the world as containing not just public objects, but public objects with socially shared values. Second, the child engages in the first full-fledged intentional acts of communication; this is when they "combine gestures or vocalizations for getting an adult's attention with gestures to indicate the content of the intended message."\(^{18}\)

By about one year, these abilities (and the accompanying motivation to engage in collaborative activities, plus growing skills in "turn-taking") make possible an endless variety of activities—hide and seek, fetch and carry—games involving small objects of no intrinsic interest to the child except that they are the focus of attention of an adult. A typical game involves the adult directing her gaze at a small object in her hand. The child grabs and holds the object. If the adult then extends and gazes at her empty hand, the child will often replace the object. If the adult then extends the object again, a patterned interaction will soon develop which seems to delight the child. At an early stage of development the child exhibits clear motivation to engage in such simple reciprocal activities, and by two years children regularly initiate such activities themselves. Again, these observations make it safe to assume that young language learners come equipped with a specifiable ability: to identify the object of another agent's attention or to intentionally bring an object to another's attention, and to engage in a collaborative activity involving that object. Here we have a clear example of triangulation; we also see a further development of empathy: the child is interested in the object just because the adult is interested in the object. This kind of empathy will soon play an important role in language learning.

In *Pursuit of Truth* Quine notes that

> empathy dominates the learning of language, both by child and by field linguist... The linguist notes the native's utterance of 'Gavagai' where he, in the native's position, might have said 'Rabbit'... In the child's case... the parent assesses the appropriateness of the child's observation sentence by noting the child's

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\(^{18}\) Melinda Small, *Cognitive Development*, p. 133.
orientation and how the scene would look from there. . . . We all have an uncanny knack for empathizing another's perceptual situation, however ignorant of the physiological or optical mechanism of his perception.  

One might wonder why Quine identifies empathy as a prerequisite for language acquisition by the field linguist and then downplays its importance in the child. Empathy is required in all participants in language acquisition, and its existence is well documented in the normal psychological and social development of infants and toddlers.

In the give-and-take game we already see the child's ability to engage in a social activity involving identifiable roles which have properties that will be relevant to language learning and use. The roles are symmetrical—both the adult and the child give, both take; the roles are reciprocal—when the adult gives the child takes, and vice versa; they are complementary—there is no giving without a taking, and both agents must be simultaneously engaged in the activity for it to come off.

This little game also illustrates other features of linguistic activity. Once the activity is established by a few repetitions, the child will begin to anticipate the adult's actions, so that variations or pauses cause surprise or agitation. When the activity is interrupted or ends (in my experience the adult usually loses interest before the child does) the child's disappointment indicates that the activity is motivated by the intrinsic value of being involved in a patterned social interaction; this motivational component will play a role in the development of more complex practices such as language.

There are some important questions to ask about the role of the child's desires in motivating complex actions. Quine's genetic story generally follows the behaviorist model of identifying reinforcement with external reward in the form of food, warmth, etc. (although he often slips into talk about "approval and disapproval"). More recently Dretske has given a careful analysis of the role of motivational states in the development of language, but he also patterns his account on behaviorist motivational models in which food is the paradigm motivator. Dretske distinguishes "pure desires," which motivate directly, from "derived desires," which acquire their motivating power from being associated with the pure ones. He then links the basic motivators and intentional behavior. "Without pure desires . . . there would be no motivation, no purpose, no behaviors explicable in terms of an agent's reasons."  

In the case of language, it is the external motivators in the world which shape human powers of perceptual discrimination and are linked to discriminating

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19 *Pursuit of Truth*, p. 43.
20 *Explaining Behavior*, p. 111.
uses of expressions that are supposed to eventually account for the intentional character—the meanings—of expressions in Dretske's naturalized semantics. But there is reason to question whether motivation and shaping of behavior by external reinforcement with food or warmth provides a complete model for development of complex human practices such as language. The complex socially directed activity of the newborn should make us suspicious of any account which does not find a place for the intrinsic motivating power of interaction with other humans. The newborn focuses on and interacts with the adult before it has ever been fed. The infant continues to interact with the adult after its hunger has been satisfied, and develops sustained patterns of interaction with adults who never provide it with food or warmth. These behavioral pattern are so integrated into normal development that we must recognize a "pure desire" for sustained interaction with other humans as an essential part of the child's motivational structure. But if this is so, Dretske's neat externalist semantics loses some of its appeal. The reason can be seen in Dretske's explanation of the link between motivation and representation, which is supposed to provide the basic semantic link.

Value, he recognizes, is basic to intentionality. For representational systems to form (i.e., for internal indicators to have functions in controlling actions) the individual must be motivated toward something—its environment must contain value: "something which when it occurs in relation to a behavior increases the chances that behavior will occur again—acts as a reward, reinforces." Once a motivational link is established between an aspect of the environment and an internal state of an organism, the internal system can be thought of, says Dretske, as representing that environmental condition. If a pigeon has been repeatedly reinforced with food for pecking a lever when a red light is displayed, then its pecking can be explained as arising from a belief that the light is red. The belief is supposed to correspond to an internal state of the pigeon associated with, and so representing, the occurrence of the red light.21

The problem with this formulation is that if large parts of infant and child (not to mention adult) behavior, including prominently verbal behavior, are ultimately shaped not by occurrences of food, water, red lights, or any other socially neutral environmental factors, but simply by the desire to continue sustained patterned interactions with other humans, then the explanation of the semantic links between expressions of language and non-linguistic aspects of the world is bound to be more complex than Dretske's picture suggests. Such complexities are, for example, illustrated by Putnam's examples of

21 Cf. ibid., pp. 100-2.
"linguistic division of labor" and in the use of proper names for objects one has never encountered—wherever part of the convention for using an expression involves deferring to the semantic intentions of others.

Nonetheless, Dretske's account is valuable in pointing up the fundamental role that value and motivation must play in any theory of meaning. As we continue to consider what is involved in the development of human practices, we will see how values emerge as crucial parts of the context for practices, and the role these values play in establishing basic semantic links.

**Conventions and Scripts**

But so far we have not identified a large enough motivational structure to clarify what and how practices contribute to the semantics of context-sensitive expressions. The give-and-take game, as so far described, is an activity, but not a practice. It consists of a pattern of intentional actions, with clearly identifiable intentional goals, primary and instrumental: the instrumental goal at each step is passing a particular object from one agent's hand to the other's; this is a means to a more basic goal of sustaining an interaction between two human agents. There is also a structure of value specific to this activity: the child shows displeasure if the object is dropped, or put in the adults pocket or replaced with a different object, or if the adult's hand closes over the object and does not reopen. There is plenty of intentional structure here for many contextualizing purposes, but the impromptu and improvised nature of the game raises questions about using this as an analogy to the conventionalized intentions and values characteristic of language. It is this conventionality that makes language a practice.

But we can easily imagine how the simple activity could become a practice. If some particular object or kind of object were repeatedly used in the game, and if all adults (or a certain kind of adult) within a group regularly engaged in this game with all toddlers (or with certain kinds of toddlers) then it would deserve to be called a practice of that group. The variety of traditional toys and of parent-child hand and face games (peek-a-boo, etc.) in different cultures indicates that this sort of thing does happen, and it is easily explained by the pleasure adults get from these activities, and the tendency to repeat, generalize, and imitate rewarded behavior. When this happens there will be a set of expectations and values shared among the children and adults throughout a community. Developmental psychologists talk about children learning scripts containing roles for agents, objects, action, etc.—these kinds of scripts will turn up as components in indexical context. Such traditionalized games can thus be used to illustrate contextual factors involved in the
conventional aspects of language use. But before we turn to the specific contextual features that contribute to the establishment and continuations of linguistic practices a methodological question, long postponed, should be addressed.

Is This Psychologism?

We have been looking at some particular psychological capacities of human infants which can—I am suggesting should—play a role in explaining the meaning of indexicals, and ultimately of other referential expressions of language. There are deep and legitimate worries, going back to Frege's and Husserl's attacks on psychologism, about the role that private psychological states and capacities should be allowed to play in an account of meaning. Kaplan, we have seen, has renewed this attack by warning of the pitfalls of "subjectivist semantics" in which the meanings of expressions are traced to internal representational states of the individual language user. And worries about letting the "cognitive significance" of expressions play a role in their semantics are part of Wettstein's reason for urging that semantics view language as a practice. It is therefore worth pausing to see why what is being suggested here is not a revival of psychologism or of subjectivist semantics.

The account here proposed is indeed grounded in psychological capacities of individuals, but from the very beginning these capacities are directed outward at public objects. A mistake that has traditionally given rise to psychologism is thinking of these outwardly directed capacities as bi-polar in nature—connecting a single agent with a particular object. On this mistaken picture, each object is taken to be represented by an internal state of the agent (the 'Idea' or 'Vorstellung'). In such a configuration there is an inevitable isomorphism between the agent's relation to the object and the agent's relation to the internal representation. This isomorphism is what can give rise to the idealist confusion between our ideas and what our ideas are of. This confusion, in turn, prompted Mill's insistence that our words refer (because we intend them to refer) to external objects, not to our ideas of those objects. This whole complex of issues and worries is avoided, however, by conceiving of the relation of the agent to an object as triangular rather than bi-polar. In the picture I am suggesting the infant comes equipped from the very beginning to focus on, interact with, and be guided by objects which are presented not as "what I see" but as "what we see" where the 'we' thematizes the interaction with another agent. There remains a merely bi-polar relation between the infant and the other agent, but from very early this bi-polar relation is balanced and supplemented by triangular relations to objects in a public
world. Furthermore, what is an agent in one activity is also always a potential object in other activities, and so the triangular objectivity is bound to win out eventually.

The structure of these triangular bonds blocks any theoretical confusion between objects and my ideas of objects—from the beginning there is a world of "socially referenced" objects whose identification involves checking with other agents "to see if I've got the right one." This triangular relation between a child, an adult, and a common external object within a value-laden motivational context for intentional action is clearly visible in the simple game of give-and-take. The nature of this structure is not essentially changed, though its base is broadened, when impromptu shared activities become repeated community practices, where both agents approach an object checking "to see if we've got the right one." It is this deep triangularity implicit in early patterns of perception and identification of, and interaction with, objects that protects against the dangers of psychologism and subjectivist semantics; the intersubjective nature of a whole class of objects, the ones involved in patterned interactions with other agents, is, I claim, an adequate anchor for the objectivity of semantics when natural language is considered as a practice grounded in a set of basic human capacities.

**Socialized Agents and Conventions as Components of Context**

As suggested above, very little is needed to move from the impromptu game of give-and-take to what could be legitimately called a practice. I have suggested that we can understand how this happens if we recognize in adults a motivation to engage in sustained interaction with the child, as we have recognized a complementary motivation in the child. A simple behavioral reinforcement model would then lead us to expect that a certain object or kind of object could become established as "the object" with which the game is played. Other adults, similarly motivated, and similarly oriented toward public objects (including, in this case, the child, the original adult player, and the observed activity) would have all the information needed to begin engaging in the same kind of activity, with the same kind of fellow player, in similar situations. On this picture we are explaining the observed phenomenon of culture-specific patterns of interaction (i.e., practices) as growing out of an interaction between idiosyncratic physical environments and a set of shared basic abilities within an evolving social environment. We observe in human cultures at large an interwoven set of such practices, and these practices help sustain and extend a network of social interaction. Many of these practices are directed at producing and distributing food, shelter, and other necessities of survival, but these "primary needs" do not fully explain the forms these activities take (since communities in similar environments can behave very
differently), and so they cannot fully explain the meanings of all these activities. Much of the activity may be shaped, and thus explained, merely by its ability to help create and sustain the network of relationships itself, the network upon which more survival-oriented practices depends. Developmental researchers have noticed infant imitative behavior that seems to have no other motivation than "as a communicative act to express mutuality," and this suggests a developmental basis for such community-sustaining practices. Their evolutionary justification, if one is needed, is that they provide a background of practices against which other immediately adaptive activities can be efficiently carried out. This is certainly true of the practice of language—once it is available, organizing a hunt can be more efficiently carried out, but this does not mean that we must look for the whole explanation of the practice of using language in the requirements of the hunt.

François Recanati's treatment of proper names suggests how we can apply what we have been observing about the conventional aspect of practices in general to explaining linguistic practices. He argues that the use of proper names involves two distinct kinds of conventions. As with other linguistic expressions, there is a general linguistic convention which every user of the language must understand (as part of knowing how to use proper names):

For each proper name there exists in principle a social convention linking that name to a definite individual, called its bearer. This individual is the referent of the name.23

The second kind of convention is the social convention referred to in the first. These "naming conventions" are not part of the language, but are, rather, part of the context required for the language to work properly.

In this framework, a proper name refers by linguistic convention to whoever (or whatever) happens to be the bearer of that name; but who (what) is the bearer of the name is a contextual, non-linguistic matter, a matter of social convention. The reference of the name thus depends on a contextual factor, as the reference of an indexical expression does.24

There is a difference, to be sure, between the way proper names are supplemented in context and the way typical indexicals are. The contextual element needed to complete the

23 *Direct Reference*, p. 139.
24 Ibid., p. 140.
meaning is clearly not a "brute fact" of the environment, like the time, place, or object pointed to; it is a convention, a social practice—the practice of using a particular name to refer to a particular individual. It is, however, a practice linked to certain physical facts about the context—it is the convention used by these agents here.25

On the details of such name-conventions, Recanati can defer to the well-known causal-chain tradition. Quoting Brain Loar, he says, "who or what 'is called' by a given name in a given community is determined by the practice of 'a class of past and present users of that name whose use sustains the general use and whose reference determines the general reference"26 Drawing on Gareth Evans, he elaborates a bit. "The role of the context of utterance is to select the community—the 'name using practice' in Evans's terminology—with respect to which the name type may be said to have a reference. To say that a token of a name refers to an object called by that name in the context of utterance is to say that the reference of the token is an object called by that name in a community determined by the context of utterance."27

The establishment and perpetuation of these practices will share basic contextual and intentional features with practices in general. Recanati's view requires that we distinguish between the conventions which link proper names to their bearers (which are non-linguistic/contextual) and the conventions which link words like 'red' to their referents (which are linguistic). Both kinds of conventions may be introduced or learned via demonstrative expressions such as "this is x," but the difference that marks the proper name convention as non-linguistic is that intention, noted above, that the name retain its connection to the particular object used in its introduction while the concept word is intended to have the same meaning regardless of which of its many instances is used in its introduction and transmission. This difference contributes in a special way to what Recanati calls the "localness" of proper names. Concept words like 'red', because of their grammatical category, come equipped with a disclaimer that their meaning is free of any attachment to the particular objects which were used in their introduction; these words are free to disperse far and wide throughout the language, without requiring their users to be conscious in any way of their origin. Proper names, on the other hand, as a feature of their

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25 This is what allows the same name type 'Maria' to be used in different contexts to name different Marias—since different conventions are linked to, or relevant to, different collections of speakers at different times.
27 Direct Reference, p. 166, n. 5.
grammatical category, come equipped with the proviso that their having an origin in connection with a particular object is always to be kept in mind in their transmission and use (even when the identity of that object is not known to the user). So although this does not prevent certain names like "Paul McCartney" from being as widespread among users of English as common concept words, it does impose a kind of restriction on how the use of the category of proper names is learned, and ensures that the earliest names a child learns, and the majority of names a person uses regularly, will be of things which are encountered in the local environment.

The special, object-oriented process of learning to use proper names provides a clear link with our paradigm of simple practices linked to particular objects. The passing back and forth of names between parent and child is not essentially different from the passing back and forth of a ball or a pebble. Getting the attention of another person by uttering a name is not essentially different from getting the attention of a child by holding out a familiar toy. This close link is dramatically illustrated in the language acquisition research. The freely reproducible quality of spoken (or signed) names allows the practice of using a name to grow to include many adults, each having the ability to call the child by its name; but in this process it is the ability of the name to attract the attention of, and to initiate an interaction with, a particular person which constitutes the vocal pattern as a name.

These reflections on name-conventions highlight a general pattern shared by linguistic and non-linguistic practices. Every active human is engaged in an endless series of particular, momentary projects, for which they draw on an endless variety of internal capacities and external resources. Humans are the social creatures we are because we come equipped with special capacities that allow us to form cooperative ties with others of our kind. The complexity of our social lives is due in part to the fact that besides just using others as resources for immediate practical projects, our interactions develop into sustained patterns, practices, which themselves become available to play a part in future projects, both personal and collective. The standing practices in a community are as much resources for the accomplishment of individual goal as are the water, food, and sticks one might find lying around; they are as much a part of the context in which human activity occurs as are those physical objects. It is this feature of language, its being a preexisting tool to be picked up and mastered for practical use, that is emphasized in what Kaplan calls "consumerist semantics." Preexisting linguistic practices function effectively only when we take them as they are, and conform to their preexisting constraints. As Kaplan says, to master the public language is to learn to "use it with its meaning." I may have a private project which I aim to accomplish by using language, but the way I use language is constrained by the
preexisting practices I find available to me. But perhaps the image of a consumer is not exactly right; better to think of us as users of a complex tool. I can use a computer to perform an unlimited range of personal tasks, but how I use it is constrained by preexisting (and relatively inflexible) features of its hardware and software. Analogously, naming conventions are tools which are locally shared and can be used to achieve private referential goals, but only when their preexisting features are respected.

The tool analogy is especially helpful in clarifying a source of confusion which may lead to the kind of subjectivist semantics that Kaplan and others have tried so hard to avoid. Language evolves and is transmitted and preserved by private acts performed for private purposes. This is especially clear in the introduction of new proper names. This fact might lead one to think that there are, therefore, purely private criteria for the successful use of certain expressions. This would amount to the mistaken conflation of "what I mean by saying something" with "what my words mean." When a name is introduced, it is important that it refer to what the user means it to—that the witnesses at the "dubbing" understand what the dubber intends to dub. But if it does, indeed, become a proper name, it will be because that first act played a specific role in establishing a conventional community practice which is then available for all to use. The smooth operation of this convention depends on language users understanding that the initial intention to use the name according to what the giver meant has given way to the intention to use the name according to what it means. The originating and the sustaining intentions are obviously related, and that relation must be understood by fully competent users of proper names, but it is the latter intention—the consumer's or tool-user's—that enters into the semantics of non-dubbing situations.

When Recanati insists that name-conventions be considered part of context he is emphasizing a revealing aspect of the semantics of proper names—they involve a kind of convention quite different from those which govern other categories of words. But when the details of these conventions are compared with the conventions governing other referential terms such as demonstratives, pure indexicals, and definite descriptions, we can identify common contextual structures being employed in those different linguistic practices. This should not be surprising in light of the way these practices are acquired.

Language acquisition is fundamentally an initiation into—a training in—a preexisting practice. This training requires and presupposes a set of capacities and motivational factors, which must, therefore, be common to those who succeed in acquiring the skill to participate in that practice. Chomskian linguistics has done much to illuminate the capacity required for mastering the syntactic aspects of language. It helps us understand the relation
between the flexibility and variability in human syntactic practices and the constraints imposed by a common underlying syntactic capacity. We should expect to uncover similar constraints on the semantic aspects of language as we explore the other underlying capacities required in learning to use language.

There is an important link between the appreciation of the preexisting constraints which language imposes on the novice (Kaplan's "proper consumer attitude") and what Putnam has called the "linguistic division of labor." When one knows how proper names work, one is able to use a proper name to refer to objects with which one is not acquainted because one can employ a preexisting practice. A name can be picked up from someone else who has already acquired the relevant practice, so it is tempting to characterize the new user as "having an intention to use the name to refer to what the previous user intended to refer to." But this characterization is apt to mislead. As we have seen, what is crucial is not the previous user's intention to refer to a particular object, but the previous user's intention to conform to a practice involving a particular name-convention, and the new user's intention to conform to that same practice. It doesn't matter whether the previous user was acquainted with the bearer of the name. All that is presupposed is that someone who acquainted with the bearer and intended to establish this convention linking that individual to that name. On this presupposition, the understanding of how name-conventions work plus the chain of intentions to abide by a contextually identified name-convention provides a means of securing reference to distant objects via proper names. Here we can see the link with Putnam's notion; the originators of the name play the role of the "experts" charged with setting the semantic standard for the name. It is not just in connection with obscure or technical words like 'elm' and 'molybdenum' that we defer to experts; the usually smooth operation of the communal apparatus of language makes us bold to talk about all kinds of things which we know little or nothing about. But this trust in preexisting practices is only arrived at through a process of mastering the detailed components of this practice, such as the name-conventions, and this mastery is only achieved in seeing how name-conventions connect expressions up with objects with which we are acquainted, and by observing that other language users are worthy of the trust we place in them to observe the constraints imposed by those conventions. It is these prerequisites that the child acquires in those early episodes of passing familiar objects (including names) back and forth with familiar adults in the rich social context implicit in our nursery scene.

What we have uncovered in this meditation on what makes language a practice is a detailed picture of the central elements in every context, the agents. Because agents are users of language, they can be assumed to possess the capacities and abilities required to
acquire and participate in that practice. To summarize, these agent abilities will include at least the following: The ability to identify other agents, to imitate them, to interact, and collaborate with them, to identify common objects of attention, to empathically perceive those objects as having intrinsic or instrumental value, to anticipate actions as involving certain kinds of agents, objects, etc. Agents can be further assumed to be motivated by a desire for sustained patterned and reciprocal interaction with other agents (as well as by more directly survival-oriented desires). On the basis of these abilities, agents can be assumed to have experience with various practices and to know what it is for agents to undertake common projects in a common world.

The Surrounding World: Public Objects and Their Modes of Presentation

In our picture of context at its simplest, we envisioned two agents directing their attention to a common external object. Each agent enters into situations like this repeatedly, and so comes to experience an environment filled with many such objects of public attention.28 In addition, these objects are often integrated into activities; they are experienced as filling slots in certain "scripts." Since they play potential roles in the agent's solitary and shared activities and in ongoing practices they have value—they motivate intentional activities of agents and groups of agents. Already we begin to see the characteristic structure of what Husserl called the "life-world." Even if the number of agents in a child's world is small, the number of public objects along with their values and practical roles will grow rapidly. And the catalogue of life-world objects will include not only physical objects but also scripts of activities and practices, and thus also the roles that these contain: kinds of objects and events—familiar gestures of giving taking, greeting and farewell, and eventually spoken, signed, or written events which will become components of the practice of language. Agents too can be counted among the objects of the world, since they fill roles in activities and practices other than that of participant. All these objects are bound together in a network of purposeful interaction which forms the background against which language learning takes place; they are available to all language users and can thus contribute to the context of language use.

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28 This world will also include, of course, objects which the individual has encountered on their own, including things such as food and drink, and many of these will motivate certain private activities and thus have primary or instrumental value to the individual. The point of focusing on objects of common attention involved in shared activities and practices is that these are the items of context that give language its intersubjective and thus objective foothold, and are thus indispensable to an objectivist semantics.
These objects will be the things available for linguistic reference, and the activities they enter into will determine which aspects of those objects are available as the referents of predicates. The coordination among objects, properties, agents and properties of agents in repeated activities and projects that we have called practices establishes a system of expectations, so that certain things come to be anticipated under certain specifiable conditions. In order to get on with a project, certain things are needed, and providing the needed thing can be part of an identifiable agent-role in the script for that practice. This is the structure of non-linguistic "turn-taking" (observed in infants from about 3 months) and will become the structure of the practice of asking and answering questions, of buying and selling, etc.; but it is already to be seen in the most primitive of practices. Let us describe this situation by saying that a practice brings along "slots" to be filled by the environment surrounding the practice. This terminology has, in fact, been used in the analysis of indexicals; the slots are thought of as certain contextual parameters which are characteristic of different indexicals. Some of these parameters may be automatically filled in every utterance situation (an agent, time, and place) but the filling of others will depend on the intentional actions and states of the agents involved (demonstrations, gestures, and complex cues involved in determining the relevance of objects, etc.). Each of these slots, because it originates in the interactive structure of a practice, brings with it a particular kind of verifying action by which the agents involved can come to share knowledge of potential values of that parameter. A gesture can function as part of context only insofar as it is visible to the other participants—a groan, expletive, or tone of voice, only insofar as it is audible, etc.

Thus when John Perry summarizes what context must contain he inquires into what kinds of things are needed to fill the slots or parameters of the various kinds of indexicals. In so doing, he distinguishes between "narrow context"—an agent, time, and place—and "wide context," which will contain these things plus "anything else that might be relevant, according to the working of a particular indexical. The sorts of factors on which an indexical can be made to depend seem, in principle, limitless."29 Perry gives a few examples of the kinds of things that can enter into broad context, including speakers' intention, but he leaves the impression the grab-bag nature of this category—containing "anything else that might be relevant"—makes it difficult to say much more about what it contains. But the fact that the variety of items that may enter into context is limitless does not mean that

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they cannot be organized into intelligible categories according to the roles they serve in the communicative practices in which they function.

Noting certain practical constraints involved in these practices can help in the analysis of the way objects enter into contexts, either as potential referents or as instrumental means to reference (such as gestures, demonstrations, name-conventions, etc.). Since we are interested in the role of context in the communicative uses of language, we can begin by noting that an object can function as part of a communicative practice only when it is available to the various agents engaged in that practice, and different kinds of objects will need to be made available in different ways. This is a place where the notion of a way of being given—a "mode of presentation"—will be useful. Some contextual parameters require perceivable physical objects, and these become available to agents when the perceptual conditions are right; the mode of givenness of a tree, or of a gesture in the direction of a tree, are of the same general kind: these kinds of things will be presented to anyone in a position to 'look and see'.

On the other hand, abstract objects and concepts are given in a different way. Although the presentation of concepts may involve perception (e.g., of instances or examples) the link to perceptions is of a different kind, and comes with a generalizing intention, as mentioned above. But since presentations of concepts presuppose mastery of a linguistic practice, we need say no more about it in this survey of the most basic (pre-linguistic) kinds of contextual features.

Yet another kind of contextual parameter, which comes into play in the earliest stages of language learning—in fact, whenever relevance becomes a factor in determining reference—is the practical value of an object relative to a particular activity, project, or practice. Values are not things that can be sensorially perceived or pointed to. They must not be thought of as properties of objects in the same way that size and location are.

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30 Besides these very general modes of presentation ("perceptual object," "abstract object," "social value," etc.) there are, of course, finer-grained modes of presentation that apply to individual objects within these classes. A perceptual object may also be given as "a person," "a person who looks so-and-so," and "the person who is Maria." The notion of a mode of presentation is most useful, I think, when we keep in mind that there is an orderly hierarchy of modes of presentation from the very general on down to these finer-grained ones.

31 I will distinguish between contextual factors that are salient—perceptually prominent, as a loud noise or a bright flash—and those that are relevant—having high practical value. Both salience and relevance come into the referential function of context, as we will see below, but they come in in very different ways, because of the different ways they are "given" or "presented."
Values are given in a different and more complicated way, presupposing practical familiarity with the activity in question. The "social referencing" by infants, in which they observe facial expressions in order to empathically tune their affective responses to situations to match the responses of others, plays an important role in mastering this mode. It is not wrong to say that we "perceive" things as imbued with value as long as it is clear that the perception involved is one that goes far beyond raw sensory input. J. J. Gibson's investigations into the value-laden aspects of animal and human perception make this point clear. What needs to be added to the Gibsonian picture of the perceived world as filled, not with value-neutral objects, but with "affordances" for active use, is the realization that complex human practices such as language grow smoothly out of the basic animal capacity to "see" practical value when this is combined with a capacity and motivation to engage in intentional social activities which create new values.

Some of the complexity of language can be unraveled by paying close attention to the way simple practices (such as local name-conventions) develop as instruments for accomplishing higher-level private and collective projects. Given Recanati's view that name-conventions are components of context (on a par with agents and times) we can construct a contextualized rule for proper names exactly parallel to the obvious one for 'I'. Just as we say that a token of 'I' in a context is to refer to the speaker in that context, we could say that a token of 'N. N.' in a context is to refer to the object connected to the expression type 'N. N.' by the name-convention which is relevant in that context. Below we will attempt to give a parallel kind of account for demonstratives, though it will be somewhat more complex, because of the details of the demonstration-conventions involved. Conventions like these are intentional kinds of contextual parameters, but nonetheless they are public parameters called for by the script of a public practice, so whatever fills those parameters must be available to all the agents involved in the practice which demands them. Demonstratives often pick out objects because of their relevance, and this relevance is precisely their practical value in relation to an activity or practice in which the agents are involved. But since value cannot perceived by mere solitary looking or listening, it must be given in a different way—involving empathic evaluation based on a history of social interaction.

Even for perceptual objects there are important things to keep in mind about their modes of presentation. We have already noted Husserl's and Kaplan's analyses of the aspectual structure of perceptual objects. Husserl emphasized that, besides their sharing the feature of being accessible through particular senses, these objects have the additional property of being given only partially and perspectivally, never completely and once and for all.
Nonetheless, an object given in this open-ended aspectual way is intended as a single unit—as the ideal fulfillment of that series of perceptions. This intimate relation between the incomplete perspectival mode of givenness and the ideal unity of an enduring object is characteristic of the "physical object" slots in social activity scripts; it surely has its origin in the public objects of common attention which populate the context of social practices. In our simple scene of two agents focusing attention on a single object we can recognize this fundamentally intersubjective structure. For each agent the object is intended as the ideal limit of an open-ended series of that agent's possible perceptions; but in addition it is intended as the limit of the perceptions of the other agent as well. If you and I are attending together to an object, our sets of perspectival perceptions may overlap—in the sense that I may turn the object to see it from your angle, or move to your point of view—but they need not overlap, much less be identical, for a common, objective, practical (or referential) intention to be fulfilled. This is because what is intended as the common object will always go beyond the collection of perceptions of both agents in any case. And because the object is intended as the ideal limit of a shared set of perceptions it carries with it both a sense of independence from each individual and also a sense of dependence on a kind of generic perceiver which both agents instantiate. (This scripted role of generic perceiver is already in place as soon as the simplest interactive activity, like the give-and-take game or peek-a-boo, develops into a repeatable practice—the objective role of perceiver becomes available at that point as a contextual resource among those who have mastered such a practice.) The common object has as a fundamental component in its way of being given that it is one independent object there for all to see—and not just to see, but to use in shared activities and practices.

Thus we begin to see context as a functionally organized structure within a public world which is not just a collection of physical objects, but rather a collection of objects infused with value through their being integrated into an array of activities, projects, and practices. And these activities, projects, and practices, along with their scripts and scripted roles, are themselves parts of that world, as objective and as available to fill contextual parameters as the individual physical objects and their properties.

Narrative Organization of Some Intentional Elements of Context

Because they are not the same kinds of entities as physical objects, activities, projects, and practices may need to be classified along different dimensions. In particular, their intentional and social aspects will need to be brought out. One way to do this vividly is by highlighting the narrative organization of these entities; this is already implicit in the
terminology of "scripts." In an activity or practice agents of certain kinds, playing certain roles, interact with objects of certain kinds in order to achieve certain goals. This is the structure of a story. It can be no accident that narrative discourse inevitably develops along with the complex intentional thinking that allows humans to function smoothly in a linguistic community.

Further, narrative is not just an aid in conceptualizing the intentional entities that enter into the human world. It also helps in understanding the ways that purely physical objects can come to be perceived as nodes in complex, abstractly organized systems. If time is experienced only moment by moment how do weeks, months, and years enter into our world? Simply as aggregates of certain quantities of moments? No. A week is a collection of moments, but a collection organized as part of a particular cyclic temporal structure. Similarly, places are not experienced merely as isolated locations of experiences but as organized into a spatial system according to relations of accessibility, relevance, familiarity, etc. People are experienced as belonging to functional types, and to social and kinship groups, as filling roles, being relevant or accessible for certain purposes, etc. These and many other structural features of the experienced world can be vividly formulated in terms of "story-lines" involving characters pursuing structured activities against a structured public backdrop. Even very abstract spatiotemporal properties such as duration, distance, simultaneity, sequence, etc., may be easier to learn and understand in their narrative incarnations than in their purely formal ones. We will return briefly below to the ways that narrative may function in the acquisition of the complex coordinated sets of intentional practices characteristic of natural language use within a linguistic community.

A "Phylogenetic" Ordering of the Components of Context

We have been tracing the development of various contextual factors which seem to be required by the nature of language as a learnable human practice. Our focus on the innate and acquired capacities of individual language learners is what qualifies this analysis as a kind of "ontogenesis of context." But the apparent heterogeneity of the different contextual factors that have been uncovered might seem to justify Benson Mate's fears about the unmanageable complexity of context. These fears may, I hope, be calmed by moving from a raw list of components that context must contain to a systematized catalogue which organizes these components into types, and then highlights the characteristics and systematic interrelations among those types. As we have seen, the communicative use of language implies that any required contextual feature must be available to all those involved in an utterance situation, and the social nature of the intentional elements of context ensures
that their availability will be linked to patterns of training within communities of different kinds. The structures of these communities can thus be used to give structure to the system of contextual features. The goal here will be to identify progressively more complex levels of context linked to specifiable kinds of regularities and patterns of intentional action: activities, projects, and practices. The aim is to display the "phylogenetic" development of contextual structure within concrete communities.

The most basic level of availability, shared with many animal species, is defined by the physical, biological, and neurological constraints on organism equipped with innate capacities and motivations tuned to the needs of survival and reproduction. The human life-world will, of course, go far beyond this level, but will never entirely leave it behind. Accordingly, simple sensory perceptions, reflexes, and reinforcement mechanisms will always have a place in the complete account of human behavior, including complex behaviors such as language; but clearly much more is needed besides.

A second level of availability is linked to the socially oriented behavioral and cognitive capacities which are universal among normal humans. (These may or may not be shared by other complex social animals.) If Chomsky is right, this will include a capacity for mastering specifiable kinds of syntactic structures. In addition, as the studies of infant development indicate, other characteristic capacities can be appealed to in a complete account of language. These will include, as mentioned, the ability to identify and interact with other humans, to focus on common objects of attention, to react empathically and imitatively to the activities of others, and motivation to initiate, prolong, and repeat such interactions.

A third level is based on the actualization of the universal human capacity for language (including syntactic and contextualized semantic capacities), which occurs whenever the innate capacities of the second level are nurtured with a certain minimal level of social interaction; this is where the child is initiated into preexisting linguistic practices. At this level we need to speak both of the capacity for language which is being actualized here and also of certain new capacities and cognitive resources that become available along with that actualization. For example, although the ability to attend to common objects is a second level prerequisite for the development of language, once language is in place, new ways of getting others to focus their attention become available. Names and expletives can take over

\[32\] This is also where we encounter the creation of new linguistic patterns such as the true Creole languages observed to develop among young children in polyglot communities. This is where we can, perhaps, best observe the dialectic between being a language-consumer and being a language-co-creator.
the functions of cries and waves, etc. As remarked above, language also makes possible certain kinds of conceptual learning that were not possible before.

Since language use is essentially coextensive with other distinctive features of human culture, this third level brings with it a collection of non-linguistic cultural capacities and resources, which unavoidably interact with the linguistic ones—such things as family and community membership, structures of generational cycles, etc. Both the universal extent and the varied manifestations of these factors are familiar from anthropology, sociology, and social psychology. The first three levels provide a universal contextual framework of empirical, psychological, linguistic, and social factors that can be assumed to be available to all language users. If we speak of a "linguistic community" here, it is one that includes everybody. These factors can thus be assumed to exercise an influence in every utterance situation. Let us call this collection of factors basic context. Basic context will include agents having the familiar objectively and socially oriented cognitive capacities, and situated in a common space of objects, stable social relations, and practices of some kind or other (including some language or other). This corresponds roughly to what John Perry calls "narrow automatic context": an agent (in abstraction from its intentional states) in a place at a time. But "basic context" in my sense is a much richer structure, already including many intentional capacities and components. It will not be easily captured in a formal model the way that Perry's narrow context might be; but this drawback, if such it be, is compensated for, I hope, by the smooth integration of basic context with those wider aspects of context which are going to be required anyway, as Perry points out, for all but the most rudimentary uses of indexicals.

In typical uses of natural language many of the most important contextual features are those that are not universal among language users but rather peculiar to smaller groups and subgroups. These smaller groups are what is usually meant by a "linguistic community." These features begin to emerge at the fourth level, that of culture-specific (including language-specific) factors—those whose availability will vary from group to group. At this level we think of agents not just as users of some language or other but as users of a specific language—e.g., English or Japanese. Kaplan has noted that one job context is almost always called on to perform is to specify what language is being spoken. The context of any actual use of language will contain not just social relationships in general but specific relationships, a particular system of kinship and status, etc. Some community-specific differences in social projects and practices which we encounter here will be

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33 John Perry, "Indexicals and Demonstratives," p. 595.
influenced by the "brute facts" of the physical environment, but many will not, and there is no particular reason to distinguish between those determined purely by physical environmental factors and those imbued with intentional and social significance. As we have seen, projects and practices bring with them evaluative structures and practical roles for both agents and objects, which become, for experienced agents, directly perceivable parts of the surrounding world. Because the projects and practices vary from group to group, these practical values and roles will vary too.

An important new contextual resource that emerges at this level is the story or narrative. The usefulness of this resource is easy to see in common situations such as when someone joins a conversation in progress and has difficulty understanding what is being said. A remark like "What's this all about?" will normally elicit a short narrative which will fill in the context required for the new person to "get up to speed." A similar kind of thing can happen for a child growing up in a culture. As we have noted, the roles, values, and motivational features of projects and practices have a narrative structure which, once language is available, can be communicated in story form. Drawing on the basic (level two) ability to empathically experience objects from a perspective not one's own, narrative makes available to the learning child a world of pragmatically structured experiences in an efficient and repeatable form. Agents who share a heritage of stories also share a common store of ideas about what kinds of things people can be and do, what kinds of things are to be desired or avoided, and what projects are and are not worth doing. Much of the idiosyncratic contextual background of a local cultural group can be encoded in and transmitted through stories. Some of these narrative resources are broadly shared throughout a language group, but others will be more local.

Here we might be tempted to distinguish a new level of availability of contextual elements in connection with local cultural and linguistic units—the "subculture" or dialect. But the boundary between language and dialect, culture and subculture, is notoriously difficult to draw. And such lines might be of little use in any case. Instead of trying to distinguish definite subgroups, it might be better to recognize a structured progression, which begins with the largest recognizable cultural or linguistic groups and proceeds step by step through national, regional, and increasingly local subdivisions down to kinship groups, extended families, and finally to the smallest stable social groupings—nuclear families, parent-child dyads, couples, work teams, etc.

On such a picture we have a system of communities nested one inside the other. The semantic impact of this kind of nested structure is well illustrated by the way proper names work. As Recanati noted, name-conventions may be associated with a
subcommunity of any size, so that when context "selects a community with respect to which the name type may be said to have a reference" it may select a very small or very large group, depending on how widespread the convention happens to be. There is a convention in the whole English language community that each proper name must be supplied with its own convention in a smaller community—a name-convention through which it will receive its actual reference. A similar thing happens with specialized technical jargon, as among doctors or computer programmers. There are conventions in the whole language that allow both familiar and neologistic words to be used in subgroups with meanings peculiar to those groups. We can normally tell when jargon is being spoken, even when we do not know what it means, just as we can usually tell when an expression is being used as a name even when we do not know the contextualized referent of the name. To know what is being said when familiar words are used as jargon, one must use context to determine the subcommunity according to whose semantic conventions the words are being used. As with names, there is, in principle, no limit to how small the subcommunity in question can be.

**Semantic Conventions That Require Pragmatic Choices**

We have seen that the semantic conventions for different indexicals come with different slots or parameters to be filled with different kinds of contextual items, and that the resources for filling these slots may be either universally available or else limited to a specific community. Some slots call for items which are themselves conventions, others for specific "brute facts" of the perceptual environment. Still others allow a range of options for the speaker in how the slot is to be filled. Here I think it is useful to observe a dividing line between semantics and pragmatics. If we take semantics to cover the conventional features of language—those features which have been incorporated into a practice—we can separate out some nonconventional—thus "pragmatic"—features in a fairly straightforward way. The naming of my first child is an intentional action I perform. It cannot possibly be a practice, since it only happens once. But it is only possible for me to succeed in this activity because of the preexisting background practice of naming children. The conventions of this practice require that I make known to the community the expression I intend to be my child's name; the convention contains a slot for an expression but does not specify how to fill that slot. When I fill this slot I am making a nonconventional use of the name, but within a convention which calls for such nonconventional uses. It makes sense to call this act "pragmatic" because I use the expression in a way not prescribed by any convention (although constrained by a dubbing convention) in order to create
something—in this case a new name-convention; This is thus pragmatic in the same way as my deciding to use a nail (although constrained by natural laws) to hold up a picture, or deciding to use 'Watch out for the ice' (although constrained by the conventions of English) to warn a friend.

A similar thing happens in figures of speech, such as metaphor, irony, etc. These are not purely pragmatic uses of language, even though the semantic features of individual cases are not fully prescribed by the conventions of the language. Such uses of language are possible only because there are conventions in the language for metaphoric, ironic, sarcastic, etc., uses of expressions. Those conventions contain within them the requirement that the speaker give some clue or other which will convey to a particular subcommunity—the audience—that an expression is being used nonconventionally. The conventions do not specify the full figurative meaning, or how the figurative intention is to be conveyed, so there is a truly pragmatic element, but the range of these is constrained by conventions of English. There is a conventional practice in English of using sarcasm, with a script that tells the audience what to look for in the context (e.g., the speaker's known attitudes toward certain individuals) in order to understand what the speaker's words mean. The pragmatics of language permit a person to attack, amuse, or confuse with sarcasm, but there are conventions that constrain how expressions are to be contextually supplemented in order to convey sarcastic content.

Kaplan illustrates a similar sort of thing in connection with "nonce names." Everyone's favorite waitress, Shirley, greets many customers with "So, Honey, what'll it be?" 'Honey' (or 'Bud' or 'Mac' or . . . ) can be successfully used as a name for the nonce because of a convention which stipulates that the user make it clear (via unspecified contextual features) to a particular subcommunity (the audience) who is the target of her pragmatic use of that expression. The glance, the context of the restaurant, the scripted roles of diner and waitress, etc., can all be drawn on, but which and how these are used are pragmatic choices left to the user; the convention requires that the speaker use a name-like expression, but again the choice of expression is left to the user.

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34 Cf. Demonstratives, pp. 560-1. Kaplan's example is a fleeting use of "Hi-ya, Beautiful." I think that in emphasizing the connection of such uses with "dubbings" Kaplan overlooks certain connections with demonstratives, which I will be trying to highlight.
Application to Demonstratives

This structure of interplay between conventional constraints and pragmatic choice is repeated in the case of demonstratives. There is a convention for 'this' that is known to all users of English. It requires that the speaker convey to an audience in the context of use, using whatever means are available in that context, what the intended referent of an utterance of 'this' is. The pragmatic task—bring the intended object to the attention of your audience—is assigned by the semantic convention. Different means are available in different contexts; some of these are dictated by the physical facts of the environment. In a darkened room, or in talking over the phone, visual cues will be worthless. Other resources may themselves be conventions (such as name-conventions), and so will vary depending on the subcommunity to which the audience belongs (and is known by the speaker to belong).

An important factor in focusing attention on an object is the value of that object; as we have seen, objects acquire value because of the roles they play in activities, projects, and practices. If the intended object plays a role in a project or practice in which the audience is known to be involved, that fact, and the value-structure it implies, will be available to the speaker in carrying out the task of drawing the attention of the audience to that object. A distinction must be made between the contextual features that are available from the perceived physical environment and those that depend on social and intentional factors peculiar to agents or communities. Let us mark these two kinds of factors by using 'salient' for prominent physical features and 'relevant' for prominent nonphysical features related to activities, projects, and practices. Kaplan points out that sensory salience—bright lights, loud sounds, etc.—can provide "demonstrations of opportunity," and Quine has put great store in the attention-attracting ability of moving objects against a static background; but these kinds of salience are not dependably available means of focusing attention on the many things we may wish to refer to demonstratively; conventionalized forms of intentional relevance fill the gap.

Here we can return to the x-ray example of Chapter 1 with new descriptive tools. Recall that, in the final version of that example, the surgeon used a single utterance of 'That's a bad one' to communicate simultaneously: a) to another surgeon, that the fracture pictured would be difficult to treat; and b) to an x-ray service technician, that the film showed symptoms of x-ray equipment in need of adjustment. The preliminary lesson of this example was that the physical facts of the context of use were not sufficient to fix the referent of 'that', since those facts were the same for both hearers, while the surgeon intentionally (and via the
conventions of English) used 'that' to refer to two things at once: the fracture and the piece of film. We can now describe the situation more fully.

The convention for 'that' requires the surgeon to focus the attention of the audience on an object, but leaves it up to the speaker how this is done. The context, including what the speaker knows of the intentional states of the audience, provides the speaker with tools for doing this. In the x-ray case we need to distinguish two audiences. Some resources are available for both—the surgeon makes a visible gesture in the direction of the x-ray. Other resources are peculiar to the subcommunities to which the two audiences belong. The technician is involved in projects involving servicing x-ray machines and in practices in which users communicate problems to technician, etc. The film is relevant to the technician because of the value it has in these projects and practices. The fellow surgeon is involved in the practice of medicine, including the practice of x-ray diagnosis, and in the project of caring for a particular set of accident victims; different things are relevant to those activities. These facts make certain value-structures available to the surgeon in trying to draw certain objects to the attention of the two audiences. Because of the differences between the hearers, we can distinguish two subcontexts, which share physical components (including the speaker) but differ in some intentional ones. I will call such complex situations "plural contexts." Note that because the two subcontexts are distinguished by contextual resources specific to certain subcommunities, the whole plural context has a nested structure parallel to the nested structure of the subcommunities involved; everyone involved belongs to the community of English speakers, as well as the subcommunity of the health care industry, but the surgeons and the technician belong to different lower-level subcommunities, and it is knowledge of these membership facts that makes the use of corresponding contextual features available. Both audiences knew that the speaker was trying to draw their attention to an object which could sensibly be called "bad," as well as an object to which the speaker could reasonably be expected to draw their attention using the physical and social resources available in the context. In the common physical context (first level) no single object is salient enough to draw the attention of both audiences—as a flash of lightning might have been. The vague gesture (second level) is enough to make one part of the room more relevant, but still not enough to fix attention on a specific object. The use of a demonstrative (third and fourth level) tells the audience members that the speaker is aware of linguistic conventions requiring more specific focus. This focus is achieved using community-specific resources (fourth level). In the case of the technician, because of the value orientation of his job, a vague gesture was enough to ensure that the film hanging on the wall would be the most relevant available object relative to his role as "diagnoser of
machine problems." In the case of the colleague, the same gesture, plus the information coded into the film was enough to ensure that the leg fracture pictured would be the most relevant available object relative to his role as "diagnoser of medical problems."

This example illustrates how factors from all four levels of context can come into play in the contextual supplementation of demonstratives. Decisive features here were from the fourth level—the specific intentional features of the nested communities to which the speaker and hearers belonged, including the projects and practices of those communities.

What Context Could and Could Not Be

The x-ray example, as just described, illustrates several interesting things about context as it applies to particular uses of indexicals. For one thing, when we distinguished between two contexts, involving the two distinct audiences, we were making use of a notion of context which is quite local. I think that for most explanatory purposes it is best to think of context as something fairly small. Here we might recall Hintikka's suggestion that when possible worlds semantics are used to describe natural language it is often best to think of possible worlds not as exhaustive descriptions of complete worlds, but as limited sets of propositions, containing just the amount of detail needed to explain the situation at hand. Certainly this is a better reflection of the actual cognitive processes of actual language users. The situation semantics of Barwise and Perry conform to this in building context out of "resource situations"—just the ones needed for current purposes.

This immediately suggests several things that context could not be if it is to play a realistic role in the semantics of natural language. Context can't be just the total of all realities surrounding an utterance. Such a view would mean that every actual utterance would have pretty much the same context. It would also raise the question of what is meant by a "reality." If one means just the physical facts, one will be unable to account for the differences between the two contexts in the x-ray example. One might wish to go beyond "brute facts" and identify contexts with "conceptual schemes," so that the technician and the surgeon could be claimed to have different ones. But Quine would surely object that on his notion of "the conceptual scheme of our culture" both technician and surgeon have the same one. The contexts we need must typically be more finely divided than conceptual schemes. In addition, contexts need to contain many practically oriented factors (such as projects and values) and arbitrary social contentions (such as name-conventions and demonstration-conventions) which really don't fit under the rubric "conceptual scheme." For another thing, contexts are things that we get into and out of all
the time, while there are deep questions about how one gets into or out of a conceptual scheme.

Husserl's notion of the *life-world* superficially resembles that of a *conceptual scheme*—he speaks of the life-world as containing certain "theoretical attitudes" emerging from Greco-European history, but it also contains the values, conventions, and practices needed in context but lacking in conceptual schemes. But again, a life-world is just too large and all-encompassing to serve the variety of functions required of context. The life-world does, however, correspond to Perry's grab-bag notion of "wide context." It contains everything that might ever be required to fill a parameter for fixing the meaning of an indexical. But if this is as specific as we can be about context, then Mates may turn out to have been right; this is just too vague a notion to be of much use in semantics.

The manageable-sized contexts we are seeking do, indeed, draw all their components from the life-world, but they do so in selective and predictable ways. Instead of the single notion of wide context, perhaps we need two related notions that reflect this selective relation. I propose to use the term "potential context" for the complete set of contextual factors available to a speaker at a particular time. This will correspond approximately to the life-world of that speaker, or to the wide context of the utterance. From this potential context let us distinguish the "active context" of an utterance, made up of just those factors being employed in that particular case. This, I believe, is the modest-sized, and flexible unit needed to perform the semantic jobs required of a "context of utterance."

**Dynamic Features of Active Contexts**

As Perry noted, some components of context are "automatic"—present in every context because of the very nature of the utterance situation. I have identified these as making up "basic context." There are times when basic context is all that is required for the understanding of an indexical, but typically other contextual factors will be needed as well. There are many processes by which new elements of context can be added. The general idea is that context is a flexible tool that can be assembled and reconfigured from preexisting elements (drawn from potential context) using pragmatic and conventionalized methods to activate specific components to serve a variety of communicative needs. I will not attempt a full description of the dynamic processes by which simple contexts grow into the larger active contexts utilized in many discourse situations; I will merely point out a few examples to illustrate the usefulness of a dynamic approach.

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35 *The Crisis*, p. xxxix.
Basic context does not contain *gestures*, but these are easily added by the speaker. A gesture, in this sense, is not just a movement, it is an intentional action, and further, one calculated to direct the attention (sometimes in a conventionalized manner) of an audience member. *Shared beliefs* can often be important contextual factors, and if a needed belief is not shared, it can be made so by the speaker presenting visual evidence for it, or by telling the audience about the relevant facts. If a *practice* or *convention* is required, the speaker can initiate the hearer into that practice. As we have seen, we all come equipped with the basic cognitive capacities to learn simple practices, and more complex practices can be built up recursively upon simple ones. The practice of language obviously makes learning further practices much easier.

An important tool in enlarging context is what Perry calls "inverse interpretation." In "normal" interpretation we use what we know about context to help understand an expression. If I know that today is Nov. 17, I can use that contextual information to understand what you are saying when you say "Today is my birthday." But if I don't know what day it is, but do know that your birthday is Nov. 17, I can interpret your utterance "inversely" to find out something about the context—its date. Often we can pick up valuable contextual information about a conversation by assuming that the speaker is being truthful and sincere, and then figuring out what the active context must be like for the utterances to make sense—what the plausible candidates are for filling the parameters of their context-sensitive expressions. Once we have adjusted our context to match the speaker's, any further context-sensitive statements will be easily understood.

Another way we give out or pick up information about context (particularly about the motivational, evaluative and attitudinal states of speakers) is by using what Kaplan calls *expressives*. These are words like 'oops', 'ouch', 'good-bye', 'bastard', etc. which, strictly speaking, have no meanings, but which do, Kaplan insists, have semantic properties because their uses are governed by linguistic conventions. These convention do not contribute anything to truth-conditions, but they do specify the conditions under which it is appropriate to use such an expression. 'Oops' does not mean "I have observed a minor mishap," but there is a convention to the effect that it is only appropriate for me to say 'Oops' when I have. I can, therefore, employ 'Oops' to alert my audience that there is something in my active context which I consider a minor mishap and to which I am attending. This act will modify the contexts of my audience, creating a common context which can be used to give an interpretation, for example, to 'that' when I say "That's a shame." Kaplan is right to say that although these expressions do not have meanings they
do have uses, and one of these is in the expansion and alteration of the active contexts
required by the context-sensitive expressions of natural language.36

Because many of the devices for building up contexts are recursive, there is no
theoretical limit to the size of an active context (although there are obvious practical and
cognitive limits). It may be informative to think of conceptual schemes as very large, and
comparatively long-lasting and stable active contexts, built up and maintained by an
identifiable community of agents engaged in systematic ongoing discourse. What makes
this plausible is that the activity of scientific description is a practice. As such it grows out
of the available resources of basic human capacities combined with whatever preexisting
store of practices are available to its practitioners. Thus the practices of counting, naming,
and categorizing find obvious application in describing. These in turn draw on more basic
contextualizing capacities—attending to common objects, imitation, empathic projection,
etc. What this structure of dependence illustrates is that such scientific descriptive
practices as co-ordinate identification of objects (which, as Quine points out, come along
with the conceptual scheme of contemporary science), are themselves dependent on the
underlying contextual structures which make demonstrative and indexical reference
possible. Thus an explanation of demonstrative reference in terms of, or elimination in
favor of, co-ordinate designation, or any other conceptually complex descriptive practice, is
clearly circular. The underlying contextual structures are best explained directly in terms of
common universal capacities and experiences of language users—as in the analysis of the
fundamental nature of assertion which Peirce placed at the foundation of what he called
"logic" in its broadest semiotic sense. These, we can recall from Chapter 5, are taken to be
"observations of the rudest kind, open to the eye of every attentive person who is familiar
with the use of language, and which, we may be sure, no rational being, able to converse at
all with his fellows, and so to express a doubt of anything, will ever have any doubt."37
Such have been the observations that make up our "ontogenesis of context."

Here we see, also, an answer to certain worries about the conceptual incoherence of the
universalizing claims and tendencies of our "scientific conceptual scheme" in the face of a
history of changing theoretical "paradigms." In the active context of scientific discourse and
investigative practice the universality of scientific statements and questions make perfect
sense and can be given clear truth conditions. But scientific practice, like any practice,
exists against a background of simpler contextual structures and mechanisms. So worries

about being trapped within *the* (or *a*) conceptual scheme of science, and about incommensurability among conceptual schemes are ameliorated by the realization that the basic conceptual resources from which these structures grow are always *still available* to practitioners of the most diverse and incommensurable practices. Where the will exists there is always a primitive common ground—illustrated by the toddler's game of give-and-take—on which new common conceptual structures can be built. This is where the twentieth century empiricist insistence on grounding scientific theory in the concrete practice of collaborating investigators gets its legitimate compelling force.

This also provides a way to think about important issues concerning cognitive and linguistic pluralism, radical interpretation, and radical translation. When we think of the field-linguist confronted with an unknown linguistic community, it is a mistake to focus too narrowly on the observational and inferential resources that are available within the linguist's own linguistic and conceptual framework. Indispensable to his task are the basic contextualizing capacities which are the infant's *only* resources in language acquisition, and which we may assume the field-linguist still retains (though perhaps in a slightly warped or disused condition).

Active contexts, as described here, have much in common with sentences. They are composed by language users to serve specific communicative purposes. They are built up from a large but not infinite stock of preexisting and publicly accessible components according to conventional recursive processes. Public access to the materials and the conventional processes are explainable on the basis of a limited store of basic cognitive capacities and a locally shared developmental background of experiences. I believe active context, as described, will be found to serve many, if not all, of the contextualizing functions required for a useful account of the semantics of indexicals, and of many other context-sensitive features of natural language.

The aim of this dissertation has been to show how deeply the notion of context is involved with persistent and important philosophical problems; I have also tried to show how the work of many philosophers of language is relevant to understanding what context is and how context works, either because it demonstrates the centrality of context-sensitive expressions in some crucial expressive uses of language or because it sheds light on how that context-sensitivity is best understood. The conclusion I have drawn from this is that there is a clear need for a careful treatment of context as a subject worthy of investigation in its own right. The aim of this chapter has been to suggest the outlines of a theory of
context which is "delicate and subtle" in the way Kaplan suggests is needed for an adequate account of the many varied uses of natural language and which nonetheless—contrary to Mates's fears—does not go on *ad infinitum.*
Fossils
Tevia and Schön examples dynamic (merging) contexts and entering "a behavioral world"

[[/// But first we should consider a few other objections that have been raised against allowing cognitive contents to play a role in semantic theory. As an example of slipping back into "Cartesian representationalism" Wettstein cites Kripke's suggestion that the reference of names depends, not as the Fregean would say, on individual beliefs about the referent, but rather on community beliefs about the referent within the relevant linguistic community. But why, asks Wettstein, should we think of reference as depending on any beliefs at all. We can, he thinks, avoid altogether talk about belief (as well as talk about other kinds of thought) when giving an account of the semantics of language if we treat it as based simply on community practice. But this suggestion will only help if we can give an adequate account of what a practice is without talking about belief and other kinds of thought, both individual and social. As we have just seen, it is not at all clear that we can do this. Nevertheless, we can take Wettstein's suggestion as a helpful assessment of one thing that is missing from Kaplan's theory of indexicality, and the accompanying theory of context. Based on this suggestion we]]

The need for an explanation of the actual uses of language has never been denied, even when attention has shifted to the intrinsic features of language. However recent discussions in the philosophy of language indicate that the time is ripe for a reorientation toward use and an explicit articulation of the relations between the various branches of investigation, in regard to their characteristic methods and problems.
We can recognize both individual and collective intentions, both standing and occurrent intentions. Next we should inquire whether these intentions can be explained as natural developments from plausible individual psychological capacities. This is in line with our standing problem about how our objective practical goals can be met.

Specifically Truth in a context in broad strokes in Bar Hillel, Montague and Davidson and in a refined form in Kaplan.

We might picture the parent and child together focusing their attention on a cookie while the parent says 'cookie', but this raises unnecessary complicating issues about the child's natural tendencies to attend to cookies and to perform behaviors that result in being given cookies. Eventually we want to account for reference to objects in which the child has no intrinsic immediate interest and which hold no immediate reinforcing power, so it might be better to avoid cookies. p. 27

One thing that does help us to understand the aspects of language that characterize it as a practice is the pattern of interactions that in general characterize the way humans undertake common projects in a common world.

Includes communicative projects /Grice

p. 44:

In the creation of a tool, the first use may be so tied up with the primary goal of the user/inventor that it is difficult to disentangle the constraints which result from the primary goal of the activity and the constraints which result from the nature of the tool being employed. A spinning stick, employed drill-wise, can be used to start a fire. When it is, the primary purpose of starting a fire is the main source of constraints on what size, shape and
kind of stick can be use if the activity is to be successful. But if the spinning stick comes
to be used as a drill, for a variety of purposes besides making fires, the inherent constraints
imposed by the nature of the tool will become more and more apparent. When I use a
drill—the modern well designed, smooth running tool—I can use it to fill any number of my
own intentions, but only if I respect the constraints imposed, not by the intentions of the
original fire starter, but by the functional nature of the drill itself. As mechanics is useful in
understanding the constraints involved in using a drill, understanding the constraints
involved in using language is aided by an examination of the nature of linguistic practices
such as name-conventions, and this, in turn, is aided by an understanding of human social
practices in general. In gaining this understanding investigations like those of Recanati,
following on the work of Austin, Strawson, Grice and Putnam prove extremely helpful.
When we take the social aspects of language seriously we see that the tool using analogy is
not quite right either. The linguistic tools we use are not mere inert objects like the drill,
but they are essentially supported in existence by the intentional states of other language
users. Perhaps instead of speaking of consumerist semantics it would be better to speak of
collaborative or team-work semantics where it is understood that the collaboration implies
a presupposed structure and task which is greater than any individual and puts constraints
on every individual but which is not consumed but rather sustained by individual activity
and includes within its presupposed constraints mechanisms for innovation and evolution.
Like a public utility language is there to serve individual needs and purposes, but assumes
and depends on all those individuals having as one of their purposes that the utility be
maintained as a common resource. The aim of this study is to provide an account of
context which is suitable for a semantic theory which is definitely not "subjectivist" in
Kaplan's sense, but not strictly "consumerist" either. It seeks to find the proper place for
individual subjectivity within an account which is collaborative, intentional and
intersubjective.
6-7 We know, for example, that an object, even an abstract object, can answer more than one conceptual "phone number." (Frege's example is the point of intersection of the bisection of two specific angles of a triangle), That two numbers always ring at the same place is something worth knowing—it has cognitive significance. And it is something that cannot be read right off from the conceptual designations; it is something science works hard to discover. For mathematical objects this can be accomplished in purely conceptual proofs, but for concrete objects it is clearly problematic. The problems become clear upon consideration of statements involving indexicals.

p20 I would like to propose a picture, couched in the examples and language which we have been tracing up to this point, aimed at identifying a specific place in a larger theoretical project—the theory of natural language—for the specific project of this work, a theory of linguistic context. It is my belief that both the shape and application of such a theory is best judged against some such picture, and there is no pre-existing consensus picture that seems completely satisfactory for this purpose; we shall see, however, that the picture I am proposing emerges from drawing together important strands from a variety of current theoretical orientations. In a sense, the picture I propose is nothing more that a restatement in an orderly format (and in non-pejorative language) of much that is taken for granted in various branches of contemporary philosophy of language.

At this level I believe we have completed our collection of all that is required for a thorough
description of the conventional context-sensitive features of natural language. There are, of
course, deeper levels of analysis, including the level of individual interpersonal histories and
private psychological states and events. Some of the entities encountered at these levels
may be relevant to explanation of some of the pragmatic aspects of language (in the sense
specified above), But they will not be required for an account of the conventional/semantic
aspects.

66

Externalist notion Quine, Smith(Circle), etc.
XYZ ++

-Such "context" may be useful in modeling certain aspects of lang.
   but for the foreseeable future will need to be grounded in an int'l
   account of cx which necessarily violates the formal constr.
   cf. ++ Kalish 1 ++ serves as part of acct of:

Context vs. Conceptual Scheme
Cf. Davidson

67

Summarize: Social intentionality: subjective means to objective goals

   Truth in a context (horizon) as means to truth simpliciter

Cf. Perry's incremental truth conditions:"The concept of 'truth-conditions of an utterance'
is a relative concept, although it is often treated as if it were absolute. Instead of thinking
in terms of the truth conditions of an utterance, we should think of the truth-conditions on
an utterance *given* certain facts about it."(Hale and Wright, p 599) Among these facts are presuppositions about the language being spoken, the agents involved, their intentional states, the local conventions they are party to, etc.

Contextualizing competence (Chomsky > Kaplan) as basic hum. capacity.