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From Signaling and Expression to Conversation and Fiction

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Abstract

This essay ties together some main strands of the author's research spanning the last quarter-century. Because of its broad scope and space limitations, he prescinds from detailed arguments and instead intuitively motivates the general points which are supported more fully in other publications to which he provides references. After an initial delineation of several distinct notions of meaning (Section 1), the author considers (Section 2) such a notion deriving from the evolutionary biology of communication that he terms 'organic meaning', and places it in the context of evolutionary game theory. That provides a framework for a special type of organic meaning found in the phenomenon of expression (3), of which the author here offers an updated characterization while highlighting its wide philosophical interest. Expression in turn generalizes to a paradigmatic form of human communication—conversation—and section 4 provides a taxonomy of conversation-types while arguing that attention to such types helps to sharpen predictions of what speakers say rather than conversationally implicate. We close (5) with a view of fictional discourse on which authors of fictional works are engaged in conversation with their readers, and can provide them with knowledge in spite of the fictional character of their conversation. Such knowledge includes knowledge of how an emotion feels and is thus a route to empathy.

Keywords

speaker meaning – natural meaning – expression – organic meaning – empathy – conversational implicature – irony – epistemic value of fiction – common ground – facial expression of emotion – blushing – animal signaling – pragmatics

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1 Varieties of Meaning

We use the notion of meaning in a dizzying variety of ways: "Those clouds mean rain," "'Apfel' means 'apple'," "The elephant's flapping its ears means it is happy to see you," "The professor's lukewarm letter for a job applicant means she does not think highly of him," "The story's meaning has to do with the nature of loss," and even, "My grandfather's frayed and threadbare fedora means the world to me." We might then separate those uses of the notion of meaning that are germane to communication from those that are not. That would exclude cases like that exemplified in, "Those clouds mean rain," and probably also the way in which your grandfather's fedora has meaning for you. This leaves words (phrases, sentences, etc.), ear-flapping, "damning with faint praise," and stories as cases of meaning germane to communication. Do they share any interesting commonalities? In what follows I will develop a perspective on meaning that aims to relate these different notions to one another without obscuring their distinctive features. In the course of doing so I will also mention some of the steps I have taken in developing this perspective over the last quarter-century, while highlighting many of the open questions that remain.

2 Natural, Non-Natural and Organic Meaning

The well-known distinction between natural and non-natural meaning due to Grice 1989 is exclusive but not exhaustive (Green 2019b). Instead there are behaviors and traits that bear meaning but that do not satisfy the factivity requirement central to natural meaning, while also lacking the sophisticated intentions required of non-natural meaning.[1] Biologists, for instance, appear to be speaking intelligibly when they describe an alarm call issued by a prairie dog as meaning that a predator is nearby (Frederiksen and Slobodchikoff 2007), or even in describing a bioluminescent millipede's glowing as meaning that it is noxious (Marek et al. 2011). Roughly, this notion of meaning consists in being designed to convey information, where the notion of design in use here does not presuppose the intervention of a sentient design*er*. In this way, we may say that kidneys are designed to clean the blood and that human skin is designed for among other things thermoregulation, without presupposing a sentient being as having done any of the designing.

1 The factivity requirement consists in this: one who asserts, "A means (that) p" when employing the natural usage of 'mean', is committed to the truth of p if she also committed to A's obtaining. This commitment does not arise for nonnatural uses. See Green 2017e for further discussion.

While the biologist's notion of meaning may not have a role to play in the discourse of laypeople, its established use in that discipline merits attention from philosophers. Accordingly, I first set out some theoretical machinery that will help us to think about this middle space between natural and non-natural meaning. First, a creature that *manifests* a state S enables a properly situated observer to know or otherwise act appropriately to the situation of its being in S. An agent's manifestation of her state need not be intentional. In looking around for my house keys, I manifest my ignorance of their whereabouts without intending to do so. (I may even be trying to hide my ignorance.) Also, enabling others to know something does not guarantee success: one may manifest one's instantiation of a state without anyone else becoming aware of that manifestation or of the state it manifests.

Some manifestations of an organism's state might *cue* others to its presence: this is a matter of providing another creature information from which it tends to benefit. Cueing may occur even if the provider of that information does not benefit from so doing. A mosquito uses a higher-than usual amount of CO_2 in the air to detect a meal; its doing so comes at my vascular expense, and since I do not reap any other advantage from the transaction I do not benefit from it (Dekker et al. 2005). By contrast, when the "sender" but not the receiver benefits, we have *coercion*, which is defined as the designed manipulation of information for the benefit of an organism doing the manipulating. Examples include a seahorse camouflaging itself in seaweed, as well as cases of one organism mimicking another to avoid attack.[2] Here of course 'design' may just refer to a result of natural selection rather than to the product of anyone's intentional act.

Signaling marks the confluence of coercion and cues, and is a matter of conveying information in a way that is due to design on the part of both sender and receiver. In our own species, sweating is a manifestation of elevated core body temperature, but is not a signal of that elevated temperature because sweating's function seems to be exhausted by its role in thermoregulation. There is thus no reason to suppose it was designed to convey information about the sweating individual, or that members of that individual's or other species characteristically make use of that manifestation as a guide to their own future actions.[3]

Contrast sweating with blushing. A number of factors may cause a person's face to redden including heat, alcohol consumption, anger, etc. Another factor

2 The topic is treated in more detail in Ruxton et al. 2004.

3 If, on the other hand, conspecifics or extraspecifics were genetically driven or learned to respond to the presence of sweat in characteristic and adaptive ways, that would provide a case for sweating's being a cue of increased body temperature.

is embarrassment, which itself may be triggered by one's awareness of one's violation of a social norm. Perhaps blushing is designed in our species to indicate such an awareness.[4] If it is, then blushing is a signal, and possesses this status even though it is not subject to our direct control. (I can even signal awareness of violation of a social norm through a blush that is against my will.) So too, one might signal one's ignorance of one's keys' whereabouts by looking around for them with the (or an) intention of letting others know that one is doing so. One might achieve this by purposefully making a racket as she searches after her keys, including letting others overhear her say, "Where are those damn keys?!"

Signaling systems, once established, are subject to exploitation, with the result that in some cases an organism may signal that something is the case (that it is noxious, say) when it is not. Once such deceptive signaling occurs, we have a case of meaning not exhibiting factivity. At the same time such cases do not require intentions to communicate. Hence there is a form of meaning—call it *organic meaning*—that is subsumed by neither natural nor speaker meaning.

The possibility of exploiting signaling systems through deceptive signaling poses a problem, for a creature that can exploit such a system will have an advantage over its conspecifics. If, for instance, I can appear to be noxious when I am not, I can deter predators without having to bear the expense of producing poison or of protecting myself against that poison once I have produced it. Because of this advantage, I will, all else being equal, have a greater chance than others of surviving long enough to pass on my genes. This in turn threatens to swamp the population with my cheating offspring, and once that occurs the original signaling system that I have exploited risks breaking down.

In light of this problem of cheating signalers, we may wonder whether natural selection has produced any signaling systems that are resilient against such corruption. Biologists discuss two kinds, indices and handicaps, and seeing certain traits as being one or the other helps us to understand otherwise puzzling phenomena. The reason is that indices and handicaps are special types of signal best understood as solutions to the problem posed by cheating signalers. *Indices* are signals that are hard to fake because of physical limitations on the signaler; *handicaps* are signals that are hard to fake due to their being costly for the signaler.[5] Both indices and handicaps make possible stable signaling

4 Dijk et al. 2009, provide suggestive experimental evidence pertinent to this question, considered more fully in Crozier and De Jong 2013.

5 Green 2007 offers funnel-web spiders as an example of organisms that use signals that are indices, and the male-stalk-eyed fly as an organism using a signal that is also a handicap. Green 2009 argues that some speech act norms make the performance of those speech acts potentially costly: a rashly made assertion or promise, for instance, can cost the speaker a

system in the sense of an Evolutionarily Stable Strategy, a notion central to evolutionary game theory.[6]

That a trait or behavior exhibits organic meaning does not yet show that it is a locus of semanticity. This would only occur when there are repeatable tokens of a type that are more or less separable from the organism itself. Some theorists might also require for semanticity that these tokens be able to combine with one another in systematic ways to produce complex meanings. We have reason to suppose that some signaling systems among non-human animals exhibit semanticity meeting these two conditions (Green 2017e). Claiming that semanticity occurs in such species does not commit us to the stronger and less plausible claim that such species' signaling systems may be characterized recursively in such a way as to generate a potential infinity of meaningful strings.[7] That claim also does not entail that illocutionary force and semantic content may usefully be distinguished in the context of organic meaning.[8]

3 Expression

'Expression' derives from the Latin 'exprimere', meaning 'to press out'. Insofar as modern uses of the former term pertain to our psychological lives, those uses point most centrally to behaviors that reliably indicate, and in that way "press out" an agent's psychological state in a manner appropriate to a state of that kind. The kinds in question correspond to the main divisions of mental states into cognitive (beliefs, semantic memory), conative (intentions, desires,

career or relationship. Seeing such speech acts as costly forms of signaling enables us to explain how they can provide reliable information about the world (for assertions) and about the speaker's future actions (for promises).

6 Maynard Smith & Harper 2003 develops the notion of an ESS in detail and shows its use in explaining a range of biological phenomena.

7 Another oft-cited feature of sophisticated communication systems is displaced reference, that is, the ability to refer to or otherwise represent something far removed from the representation. Insofar as this is a feature of sophisticated communication systems, it would seem that what motivates it is that representing tokens are epistemically rather than spatiotemporally distant from what they represent. But this is found even in relatively primitive communication systems. For instance, comparatively long eye-stalks of the male stalk-eyed fly, *Cyrtodiopsis dalmanni*, signal its fitness to females (David et al. 1998). That fitness is encoded in features of the male fly that are spatially close to the eye-stalks. This information is thus physically proximate but epistemically distal.

8 Green 2018c provides a refinement of the distinction between illocutionary force and semantic content, while defending that distinction against recent challenges.

preferences), affective (emotions and moods) and experiential states (a.k.a. qualia). Resources used for expression of a state of one of these four kinds may not carry over to those needed for expression of states of another.[9]

In its central modern uses, the notion of expression also remains true to the idea of pressing out by demanding that behavior expressing a state provide sufficiently reliable evidence to count as showing it. Showing by pressing out, however, may take more than one form. One of these forms provides strong enough evidence to enable propositional knowledge in appropriate audiences that some state of affairs obtains (showing-that); another type of showing makes an object perceptible to appropriate audiences (what I call showing-α), thereby enabling perceptual knowledge; a third type shows how something appears, feels, or is done (showing how), thereby enabling ability-knowledge, or know-how, in appropriate audiences. The showing that occurs in expression may take any of these forms as appropriate to the type of state being expressed.

A galvanic skin response might be a manifestation of anxiety, but that does not suffice for its being an expression of anxiety. Instead, in expressing ourselves we share our take on how things are in a way that is a product of design. This is reflected in the present characterization of expression as a type of signal. Some expressions of attitude are carefully orchestrated (as in, e.g., a sardonic lampooning of a government's policies), others spontaneous (as with a hug given upon seeing a long-absent friend), and yet others are involuntary (such as when one blushes out of embarrassment or weeps in grief at the unexpected

9 The requirement of an appropriate mode of expression is a modification of my earlier treatments of the phenomenon in for instance Green 2007 and Green 2011. Bar-On 2010, and Sias & Bar-On 2016, have challenged that approach by noting that it implies that one can express, say, one's fear, by intentionally providing propositional-knowledge enabling evidence that one is in such an affective state. Suppose that an fMRI or similar setup is able to detect activation of amygdala and related emotion centers in the brain characteristic of fear; suppose further that such a machine is now detecting such activation within me. By providing you with the data generated by the fMRI machine, I show and perhaps also signal my fear. However, it does not seem that in so doing I am expressing fear. The current refinement neutralizes this challenge by demanding that an expression of a psychological state must be appropriate to a state of that kind; we point out as well that in general an expression of an emotion will make one of its characteristic features perceptible, while the fMRI fails to do this. The qualification, 'in general', of the last sentence is in order because culture might produce ways of expressing affective states that do not preserve their perceptible quality: a verbal slur might express contempt toward a group of people due to its conventional meaning, and not because it needs to be uttered with a contemptuous tone of voice or sneering facial expression. fMRI machines do not offer a conventionalized replacement for visceral emotional expressions in the way that slurs do. That could of course change as neural monitoring technologies become more pervasive.

death of a loved one). In some cases it is not difficult to characterize the psychological state being expressed in such behaviors, and we have a good handle on what it is to express anger, fear, joy, or disgust. In yet other cases our best way of indicating the state being expressed is with the preface, 'a sense of,' as in 'a sense of power laid waste,' (Wollheim 1968) or 'a sense of crisis,' (Leibowitz 1991), or 'a sense of a situation's absurdity' (Green 2017a).

Many emotions have characteristic facial and behavioral signatures: there is a stereotypical way in which angry people look and act; likewise for other emotions such as sadness, fear, surprise, and happiness.[10] What is more, it is possible to express one of these emotions without making clear what that emotion is directed toward. My sad face might fail to telegraph what I am sad about and it can be clear that someone is afraid with little indication of what they are afraid of. These are among the reasons why we can readily imagine early humans expressing their emotions before the advent of language or other convention-dependent means of communication. Because expression is also a signal, this in turn is good reason to think that expressions of emotion are intelligible without conventional communicative devices.

One way of appreciating the intelligibility of emotional expression outside of conventions is with the notion of perception. You can see a book by seeing its cover, and a house by seeing its front. Rather than conclude that all we really see are the book's cover and the house's front, it is truer to common sense to conclude that we see both artifacts by virtue of seeing (or otherwise perceiving) one or more of their characteristic components. Similarly, the pancultural emotions (sadness, anger, happiness, fear, disgust, and surprise) are congeries of qualitative, physiological, behavioral, and expressive features. Perception of any of these characteristic features will, under normal conditions, suffice for perception of the emotion itself. The thesis that some emotions are perceptible provides a third option for our theorizing about our knowledge of other minds beyond the Theory Theory and the Simulation Theory, and comports with embodied approaches to cognition and affect.[11]

10 This claim about stereotypes is naturally construed as saying that many emotional expressions are relatively constant across cultures, and it has been challenged in recent years by such authors as Russell (2016) and Jack (2016). Green (2016a) argues that even if the pancultural claim is not borne out, it may still be that each individual has characteristic ways of expressing her emotions, and that learning about these patterns in the behavior of people with whom we frequently interact is a dimension of the expertise that we gain as we learn to fit within a social milieu.

11 Green 2010a defends the possibility of perceiving emotions. Green 2016a develops that approach while showing how it may be maintained consistently with acknowledging considerable variability of emotional expressions among cultures. Gallagher & Varga

By contrast with the case of emotion, it is at the least difficult to see how to express one's belief without also making clear its content. Belief expression is instead facilitated, if not absolutely required, by convention-involving means of communication. While appropriate combinations of gestures and environmental situations might enable expression of a belief (including its content), language plays yeoman service in expression of this and other cognitive states. Accordingly, while the prototypical means for expressing emotions and moods is by making them perceptible, the prototypical way of expressing cognitive states such as belief is with language, and most characteristically with either an indicative sentence, a Noun Phrase, or a Verb Phrase.[12] Instead of making perceptual knowledge of an attitude available, however, such a sentence uttered under the right conditions enables propositional knowledge of a speaker's cognitive state. Conative states by contrast seem to be poised between these two poles: while we lack an established practice of thinking of intentions as available to perception, everyday experience enables swift detection of an agent's intention with no need for conventional communicative means, linguistic or otherwise. Seeing what you're reaching for puts me in a good position to work out what you're trying to get.

While the point is more controversial, we also seem on occasion able to express experiential states: a painting might express my visual experience of a horizon at dawn, and a piece of music might express my experience of a gentle breeze as it plays upon the surface of a pond. While talk of expressing experiences does not sound as familiar and idiomatic as do expressing beliefs or emotions, this may be due to such discourse's being unusual rather than to its transgressing a categorical limitation. Further, an artist may need all her insight and technical skill in order to find a way of expressing an experience. In less challenging cases, a speaker might use a metaphor or simile to give others a sense of an auditory experience:

A. What was the audience's reaction to your new joke?
B. You could've heard a pin drop.

2014 discuss the relation between emotion perception and embodied cognition and affect.

12 Responding to Stainton 2016, Green forth-b argues that while indicative sentences are useful, they are not absolutely required either for the expression of belief or even for assertion.

B's figure of speech in response to A's question provides an auditory image enabling A to imagine what the venue sounded like after B tried out his latest attempt at humor.[13]

In what way may involuntary behaviors be expressions, then? My hypothesis is that insofar as they are designed by natural selection to convey information about an agent's psychological state, they signal that state, and if they do so with sufficient reliability, they also show it. On the account of expression offered here, this means that one might express embarrassment, anger, or fear without any intention of doing so—indeed while intending not to do so. Further, on the present account it will not be a priori knowable whether a given trait or behavior is a case of expression. Thus although our folk theories of mind treat smiling, scowling and certain other facial configurations as expressions of happiness, anger, etc., new discoveries in genetics or in the fossil record could prove such views to be incorrect, and could reveal as well that other behaviors not normally thought of as expressive are in fact designed to signal an agent's state of mind.[14]

Expression has grown beyond its origins in the concept of pressing out to become a broader category of which self-expression is a special case. The broader category includes behaviors and artifacts that are expressive of attitudes that the behaving agent may not in fact possess. An actor may portray a sad character without herself feeling sad; insofar, her behavior is express*ive* of sadness without expressing *her* sadness. (A Method Actor's performance might be expressive while also expressing her own psychological state.) A musical work played on the radio might be melancholy even though it was written by a happy composer and performed by serene musicians. I might also express another's state of mind by means of direct or indirect discourse, or instead free indirect style; likewise for former states of myself. An artifact or behavior expresses psychological state Ψ, then, just in case it is either a case of an agent's expressing her Ψ, or is expressive of Ψ. Elsewhere (Green 2016a) I have termed the above disjunctive characterization of expression the *genitive-or-generic*

13 I further develop some of these connections among metaphor, imagery, and expression in Green 2017f and 2018b.

14 Cultural evolution may also design behaviors for expressive purposes, and an agent might adopt one of these behaviors without being aware that she is doing so. A speaker may be unaware of her use of upspeak (Warren 2016), for instance, while still expressing affiliation or a sense of non-aggression in employing the intonation pattern characteristic of this practice.

approach, the left disjunct capturing the phenomenon of self-expression, the right capturing the phenomenon of expressiveness.[15]

Just as we find forms of signaling that are best explained as solutions to the problem of establishing stability, so too we might inquire if any expressive behaviors have the (or some of the) features they do by virtue of their enhancing stable communication systems. For most of us, displays associated with strong emotions (such as the tears associated with extreme sadness, or the dramatic retching associated with strong disgust) are difficult to produce at will. This suggests that they are indices of the emotions with which they are associated and not just signals thereof. Likewise, those speech acts in which an agent risks something of value such as money or reputation, may be seen as analogous to handicaps in the sense of that term used in the evolutionary biology of communication. In spite of the common dictum that talk is cheap, we do well to note that some talk, particularly when it rises to the level of speech act, can be costly: just consider the career-sinking consequences of reporters who file fabricated articles, scientists who publish fudged data, or those who libel others. Such dire consequences are symptoms of the fact that some illocutionary institutions are loci of epistemic vigilance, and my hypothesis is that such policing helps to ensure that those performing certain speech acts are able not only to indicate their psychological states, but also to show them.[16]

Accordingly while beliefs and similar cognitive states are difficult, and perhaps impossible, to perceive, my hypothesis is that certain speech act norms function to enable speakers to show such states to addressees by helping them provide compelling evidence of their presence (Green 2009). For the case of assertions, they do this by justifying the following reflection on the part of observers: "She wouldn't say that if she didn't know." We may find this a fruitful hypothesis about assertion specifically without having to decide on which norm(s) (knowledge, justification, etc.) best characterize that speech act (Green 2016b).

15 Self-expression is then characterized as follows: *A expresses her psychological state* Ψ just in case she shows and signals her Ψ in a manner appropriate to Ψ. Self-expression is thus only defined for psychological states an agent is in. Also, in Green 2007 (p. 43) I restricted the definition of self-expression to psychological states of a sort to which it is possible to have introspective access. This restriction now seems to me unnecessary, and so heretofore I would eschew it.

16 Green 2008b discusses the difference between showing and indicating in the course of highlighting the points of departure of my own work from that of Wayne Davis, for instance Davis 2003.

4 Conversation

Conversations enable us to do more than manifest our states of mind. We persuade, plan, and explain, both in the sense of explaining how things are and in the sense of explaining what to do under certain circumstances. An influential view of conversation is as a series of utterances, undergirded by an ever-growing common ground, which is a set of propositions that a group of interlocutors accept, and recognize one another as accepting (Stalnaker 2014). This approach helps us to make sense of the use of presupposition-invoking words and phrases, as well as of the resolution of indexicals. However, conversations also typically have a telos, that is, an aim that interlocutors collaborate to achieve. It is not, of course, the case that there is one aim that all conversations have; rather our suggestion is that all conversations have some aim or other. The best-known such aim is to answer a question. That question may be a theoretical (pertaining to what is the case) or a practical one (pertaining what to do). I will call the former *Inquiries*, and the latter *Deliberations*. What is more, interlocutors do not always play symmetrical roles. In some cases one speaker is behaving didactically (often quite properly), and in other cases a speaker can draw out answers from the other in a Socratic manner. Table 1 is a diagram of some of the main kinds of things we can do in conversations.

Speakers will have different expectations of one another, and will interpret one another differently, depending on how they construe the nature of their

TABLE 1 A Taxonomy of Conversation-Types

	Inquiry	**Deliberation**
Symmetrical:	Speakers pool their information to answer a theoretical question.	Speakers pool their information & calibrate desires to answer a practical question.
Asymmetrical: didactic	One speaker answers a theoretical question for her audience.	One speaker shows or tells others how to do something, thereby answering a practical question for them.
Asymmetrical: Socratic	One speaker leads another to answer a theoretical question for herself.	One speaker leads another to answer a practical question for herself.

conversation. My not answering a question if I am leading an asymmetrical didactic inquiry will not show that I am not in an epistemic position to do so. By contrast my not doing so in a symmetrical inquiry may well suggest this. More broadly, keeping in mind the kind of conversation in which interlocutors are engaged helps to focus intuitions concerning when a bit of content is part of what a speaker has said, or is instead implied by a speaker's saying of something else.[17] To see why, we note that one focus of the last three decades of research in pragmatics concerns the pragmatic determination of what is said. Consensus had previously held that contextual factors are only needed for disambiguation of ambiguous words or phrases and the assignment of values to relatively pure indexicals such as 'I', 'here', and 'now'. However, authors such as Carston and Bach argued vigorously that pragmatic factors help to determine the contents of utterances even in the absence of ambiguity or pure indexicals.

Bach (1994; 2001) argues that in addition to what we say explicitly, speakers often leave much implicit in what they say. In an utterance of

1. The water is ready,

Bach contends that so long as she did not misspeak, a speaker says, and says only, that the water is ready. However, such an utterance will nevertheless not be an adequate contribution to a typical conversation unless it is also understood that the speaker means that the water is ready for…use in bathing, cooking pasta, or drinking, as the case may be. Yet this further content (whatever it may be) is thought not to be conversationally implied, for the reason that it is widely held that conversational implicatures are only generated by illocutionary acts.[18] For these reasons, Bach refers to such phenomena as conversational implic*i*ture (rather than conversational implic*a*ture). Presumably what is implicit in an utterance will be driven by what a speaker intends though perhaps not exclusively by what she consciously intends. Furthermore, it seems plausible that to discern what is implicit in an utterance, interlocutors will advert to the aim(s) of the conversation in which it occurs. Whether we are having a conversation aimed at planning evening baths for our children, or instead our goal is to organize the cooking of dinner, will surely guide us in settling what is implicit in an utterance such as (1).

17 In Green 1995 I argued that attention to the type of conversation in progress helps us to avoid misconstruing Gricean maxims. I followed up on this idea in Green 1999, arguing that such careful attention also helps us to generate more accurate explanations of how implicata are generated than was common in the literature at the time.

18 I explain reasons for doubt about this last assumption in Green 2017d.

In further illustration of this line of thought, recall that Grice distinguished between particularized and generalized conversational implicature, the latter of which comprises cases in which implicature is generated with great regularity (1989, 37–40). For instance, an utterance of

2. I broke a finger today

will typically be taken to implicate that the finger in question belonged to the speaker. However, this implicatum may be canceled either explicitly, as in

3. I broke a finger today; luckily it was not one of my own, but one on the hand of a cadaver in the morgue where I work.

Alternatively the standard implicatum of (3) could be canceled in a context in which it is common ground among speaker and addressee that, say, the speaker works in a morgue.

Carston (2004) by contrast proposes that the putative implicatum in cases such as this should be seen as contributing to the content of what is said. This proposal, if correct, would help to account for a phenomenon noted by Green 1998 and others, namely that such an implicatum is normally heard as embedding within the scope of higher clauses, as in

4. If you lose a contact lens, it helps to have a spare pair of glasses on hand.

(4) is naturally heard as being a near-platitude, and one explanation of this fact is that the antecedent's content is heard by default as 'You lose a contact lens of your own' rather than 'You lose *a* contact lens (possibly not your own)'. Carston goes on to argue that if the alleged implicatum is part of the antecedent's content in (4), then uniformity, together with other considerations she adduces, suggest that we treat it as part of what is said in unembedded utterances as well. Carston thus shares a position with other authors such as Bezuidenhout (2002) and Recanati (1989; 2004), who argue that the truth-conditional content of our utterances is more pervasively dependent on pragmatic factors than the Gricean tradition takes it to be.

According to such truth-conditional pragmatics, in a typical utterance of (2), the speaker not only speaker-means, but also *says*, that she lost one of her own fingers. It is doubtful that intuitions firmly support this position. For instance, the indirect discourse attribution, (5B), seems to reach beyond the verbal evidence provided by (5A):

5A. (Asserted by Melissa) "I lost a contact lens today."
5B. Melissa said that she lost one of her own contact lenses today.

Instead, a more accurate if longwinded report would seem to be

5C. Melissa said that she lost a contact lens today, meaning thereby that she lost one of her own contact lenses.

On the other hand, 5B is more plausible when we think of 5A as being a contribution to a conversation in which the issue of Melissa's own contact lenses is at issue in the sense brought out by Figure 1 above. Thus, if 5A is said in response to the question, 'Why are you wearing glasses?' or 'Are you having trouble seeing?', then Melissa is more naturally heard as saying that she lost one of her own contact lenses, rather than that she merely lost some contact lens or other. Here, then, is an illustration of how attention not to conversational context in general, but to the ostensible purpose of a conversation in particular, suggests resolutions to controversies about the proper delineation of semantics and pragmatics.[19]

5 Fiction

It needs no argument that a conversation can take place within a novel or short story. I defend a different thesis, that the transaction between the author of such a work and her reader may be fruitfully construed as a conversation as well. For simplicity's sake, let us treat the sentences of a novel or short story as being tokened by the author as invitations to imagine.[20] On one way of thinking about this transaction, the author and readers are engaging in a didactic deliberation in which the former tells the latter how to direct her imagination. Thus for instance, toward the end of Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, we read,

> Upon the cornice of the tower a tall staff was fixed. Their eyes were riveted on it. A few minutes after the hour had struck something moved slowly up the staff, and extended itself upon the breeze. It was a black flag.

19 See Green forth-a for further discussion of these issues.

20 The approach here is developed in detail by Stock 2017. For discussion of Stock's position, see Green 2019a.

Hardy is here directing readers to imagine, for instance, not only that a black flag has been raised atop the tower, but, given the reader's recollection of earlier events of the story, also that Tess has been executed for the murder of Alec D'Urberville. The latter understanding exploits the common ground that the author has previously constructed with the reader, namely that series of events constituting the plot of the story thus far.

Philosophers concerned with fiction often ask what is true in a work of fiction, given that stories often leave many questions unanswered. My concern has been not what is true *in* a work of fiction, but whether it is possible to get truth, or more precisely knowledge *from* proper engagement with it. In one respect an affirmative answer to this question is easy to come by: it's reasonable to suppose that, for instance, Thomas Hardy's description of country life in late-19th century England is a good source of knowledge about that period. Assuming at least that secondary literature on Hardy does not undermine the veracity of his characterizations, we may learn from his descriptions how, for instance, mechanization began to supplant traditional farm labor during this time. I am concerned instead with sources of knowledge that are more integral to a work's fictionality.

One way in which such sources can be more integral is the following. In everyday as well as academic settings, we gain "new" knowledge through thought experiments. Suppositions for the sake of argument, a special case of which is *reductio ad absurdum*, enable us to widen the scope of our knowledge. This is so even if it is also true that in some cases such forms of reasoning only draw out what was implicit in what we had previously known. In the everyday practice of supposition, while there is little constraint on what you can suppose, what you infer from that supposition is tightly constrained not just by logic but also by known fact. When we suppose, for instance, that we repurpose an amount of farmland currently used for beef production to some other more efficient purpose, we need to keep fixed as many other facts as possible as we reason through the consequences: the amount of water saved, fertilizer and antibiotics not used, and so on. These calculations are often difficult, but at least we know the constraints under which we are working.

We may also think of suppositions found in philosophical and everyday conversation as first steps into fiction. A minimal such fiction might for instance ask, what if the US is taken over by a fascist government in an electoral cycle in the near future? Answering this question requires staying as close as possible to what we can reasonably predict given what we already know about politics, the economy, and human psychology. The fiction will thus fail if the author asks readers to suppose that supernatural beings impose their will on the new oppressive regime to assure that they maintain a modicum of decency toward

the subject population. In contrast, genres characteristically block certain types of "importations." Reasoning under the scope of the near-future election fiction requires that we continue to respect the facts of biology, psychology, geopolitics, and the like. Yet science fiction, magical realism, ghost stories, and other genres allow us to keep many background facts from intruding on our reasoning and imaginative engagement. No "internal" objection can be raised to a ghost story in which supernatural beings play a role, or to a magical realist story in which a character survives for decades by eating the dirt she finds on the floor of her hut. (This is not to suggest that all or most readers enjoy or should enjoy such genres: each such genre demands an acquired taste that a particular reader may have no wish to acquire, or may attempt to acquire but fail to.) It's a reasonable conjecture that the most minimalist fictions are more likely to yield knowledge than are those falling within genres allowing more radical departures from reality. This is suggested by the fact that we read such fictions not just for entertainment but also for instruction or discovery: we want to know what such a world would be like, and what that in turn would show.

We should not, however, infer that fictions whose genre characteristics block importation of certain realms of worldly fact are bereft of epistemic value. A science-fiction story in which characters are faced with the option of "uploading" the contents of their minds onto a cloud server will invite readers to confront diachronic questions of personal identity even though it is known that such uploading is far beyond our current technology. A horror story in which analytical, skeptically-minded investigators encounter seemingly unimpeachable evidence of the supernatural will encourage readers to consider the question whether rationality could dictate belief in events other than those consistent with the known laws of physics. Readers cannot simply dismiss the question such a fiction raises by reminding themselves of their naturalist commitments.

One may think of fictions such as the above as elaborate thought experiments, and not crucially different from what we do in philosophy. I do not take this as an objection to the proposal that works of literary fiction are potential sources of knowledge, since I am not prepared to defend the thesis that the epistemic value that mainstream fictions have to offer cannot be achieved in any other way.[21] On the other hand, a characteristic feature of such fictions, when of sufficiently high quality, that distinguishes them from philosophical thought experiments and those found in everyday conversation is their mobilization of empathy, to which I now turn.

21 See Green 2010c for further discussion.

It is common to characterize empathy metaphorically with such phrases as, "putting yourself in someone else's shoes." What does this come to? First, empathy is distinct from emotional contagion, sympathy, and compassion. One can "catch" another's emotions (as we find in emotional contagion) without empathizing with them, and one can feel or act out of concern for another (as in sympathy and compassion) without empathizing with them. What is required for empathy is instead acquaintance with some feature of the target's psychological state, and use of that acquaintance in the service of imaginative engagement. Suppose my friend is grieving. I may have grieved in the past, and can call up my recollection of that experience in order now to imagine my way into her situation. This can happen without my grieving with her, but would still be an exercise of empathy. Furthermore, a previous or current experience of grief is not required for such empathetic engagement. As I have argued elsewhere (Green 2008a, Green 2010c, Green 2017b, Green 2017c), even if I have never myself grieved, I can achieve acquaintance with that emotion by engaging with a literary work that knowledgeably describes it. A novelist's knowledgeable account of what a parent undergoes after the death of their child, say, can put me in a position to understand what an analogous situation would be like for me. My experience with the novel will in turn put me in a position to empathize with the grief of a nonfictional friend by imagining what they are going through. Given, further, that knowing what psychological process someone is undergoing does not require knowing exactly what that process is like, this empathy-enabling characteristic of literature highlights one way in which it can be a source of knowledge.[22]

This characterization leaves some hard questions unanswered. Some types of empathy may be too morally fraught for us to feel comfortable with. How many of us wish to empathize with a pedophile or a racist, even if doing so might be useful to us as clinicians or in the context of a debate over bigotry in our society? It would be useful to know when some types of empathy are appropriately off limits, and why. Also, it is all too easy to think we are empathizing with someone else when in fact we are at best over-stating our achievement and at worst just deceiving ourselves. Instead, we do well to bear in mind

22 The notion of empathy I am employing corresponds to Goldie's (2011) notion of "in-his-shoes perspective shifting," rather than "empathetic perspective-shifting." Also, Green 2018a builds on the approach described in the text to relate empathy to self-knowledge by noting that empathizing with another can help me to see myself from their perspective. That may in turn help me to see aspects of myself that I had been blind to merely by trying to know myself in a "first-personal" way. As Coplan & Goldie (2011) observe, this aspect of empathy thus bears affinity with its treatment by phenomenologist Edith Stein (2002).

that empathizing is a hard-won skill, and a fuller account of the know-how that it involves would provide useful guidance here. Further, we tend to think of the kind of employment of imagination found in empathy as a deliberate act, but this is not essential: one can also find oneself empathizing with another quite spontaneously, and perhaps even against one's will.

Some elicitation of empathy may, that is, be coercive. In this light, a good portion of expressive behavior, particularly of the kind that expresses emotions, is a matter of making our, or at least a, state of mind available to others in such a way that they might empathize with it. Getting others to empathize with us can elicit their succor, sympathy, or support—for good or ill.[23]

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23 Green 2016c argues that in spite of modern society's valorization of empathy, there is nothing inherently positive about this way of relating to the minds of others. Empathizing with bad people or points of view can help cultivate negative emotions or character traits. Also, an anonymous referee has asked whether empathizing with, say, the emotions of an historical figure would entail, implausibly, that one has also become acquainted with that individual. No such entailment holds, however, not least because the relation between a particular affective state and a person undergoing it is too adventitious to support it.

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