

SEMANTIC KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE

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HORNSBY ON THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF SPEECH

ABSTRACT The central claim is that Hornsby's argument that semantic knowledge is practical knowledge is based upon a false premise. I argue, contra Hornsby, that speakers do not voice their thoughts directly. Rather, our actions of voicing our thoughts are justified by decisions we make (albeit rapidly) about what words to use. Along the way, I raise doubts about other aspects of the thesis that semantic knowledge is practical knowledge.

Epistemologists who write on knowledge of language tend to focus upon an analogy between *understanding* and *perception*. It is therefore a familiar point that one can think of understanding as a case of perception, with the evidence for one's belief that x said that p being a non-inferential experience of understanding that p on the basis of an utterance of x. In her contribution to this symposium, Hornsby pursues a refreshingly distinctive course. Instead of concentrating on the epistemology of language understanding, she focuses on language *production*. She argues for a distinctive phenomenological claim, which she uses in defence of her thesis that semantic knowledge is practical.

There are some immediate advantages to focusing on language production versus language understanding in seeking to argue that linguistic competence is practical. Those who hold that language understanding is akin to some kind of non-inferential perceptual grasping face the obvious objection that the pervasive context-sensitivity and ambiguity of natural language sentences forces hearers to engage in inferential reasoning about meaning in order to grasp what is said by an utterance. When someone utters the sentence 'The policeman arrested the robber. He was wearing a mask', we generally interpret the pronoun 'he' as

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referring to the robber, rather than the policeman. We arrive at this interpretation by exploiting inferences about the plausibility of interpreting the pronoun in different ways, inferences guided by our knowledge of meaning together with background knowledge about the world. Virtually every sentence we hear contains context-dependent expressions. Therefore, virtually all of our experience as language interpreters involves making consciously accessible linguistically guided inferences about semantic content.

In light of this, the defender of the phenomenological claim about understanding may attempt to argue that after we have performed such inferences, our experience of understanding meaning remains ‘quasi-perceptual’ (cf. Fricker (2003), pp. 349ff.). But to respond in this way undermines the force of the original phenomenological considerations. Since hearers do not simply grasp the meanings of utterances, one cannot appeal to the claim that they do as a phenomenological datum. Subtle versions of the original claim may be formally consistent with the ubiquity of context-dependence and ambiguity, but the original claim is then not an intuitive datum one can appeal to in argument, but a controversial thesis one must defend from apparent counterexample.¹ The advantage of Hornsby’s novel considerations about the phenomenology of language *production* is that they appear to bypass such concerns. I don’t need to disambiguate my own utterances, or appeal to facts about the conversation to interpret one of the referring expressions I use.

Hornsby’s target is the view that (in her words) ‘the best explanation of someone’s being in a position to understand what another says on occasion is that their standing knowledge includes knowledge of a compositional semantic theory for their language’. In particular, Hornsby seeks to show that, in speaking, we do not employ meta-linguistic propositional

1. In Fricker’s excellent (2003), she argues that visual perception too involves inferences (*ibid.*, pp. 351), albeit at the deep sub-personal level. But the interpretation of context-sensitive expressions is obviously and non-controversially guided via consciously accessible inferences from background beliefs. In contrast, it is a much contested issue whether perception is also so affected. If perception is in fact affected by background beliefs, one requires subtle examples to show it. This difference between visual perception and linguistic understanding is enough to show that the claim that understanding is perceptual does not have the status of a phenomenological datum.

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knowledge about the words we are using. We are, to use her apt expression, ‘voicing our thoughts directly’, without employing meta-linguistic knowledge about the vehicles we use to express them. My purpose in this paper is to show that, despite the novelty and interest of her approach, Hornsby does not succeed in her project.

I

There are a thorny series of questions surrounding the terms of the debate concerning the nature of semantic knowledge. Here is how I prefer to use the terminology. On my view (Stanley and Williamson (2001)), practical knowledge is a species of propositional knowledge. Knowing how to ride a bicycle amounts to there being a way in which one can ride a bicycle such that one knows that that is a way in which one can ride a bicycle (though the construction ‘knows how to ride a bicycle’ also permits other readings). Furthermore, for the ascription to be true (or appropriate, depending upon one’s favoured semantics for attitude ascriptions), one needs to entertain the way of riding a bicycle under a practical mode of presentation. I do not believe there is any form of genuine knowledge that is non-propositional; though we speak of ‘knowledge by acquaintance’, I don’t assume that this locution refers to a state that shares very interesting properties with genuine knowledge states.

One powerful argument that knowing how to ride a bicycle is propositional knowledge comes from the fact that ‘know how to ride a bicycle’, like ‘know who to call in case of an emergency’, or ‘know why to vote Democratic’, is a linguistic construction involving a question word (‘how’) and an infinitive, that combine to form what linguists call an *embedded question*. A straightforward application of the standard syntax and semantics for embedded questions yields the above account of knowing how. Furthermore, the fact that the word for ‘know’ in ‘know how’ constructions cross-linguistically is generally the same as the word for ‘know’ in other embedded question constructions suggests that we are dealing with just such a construction in English, and there is no reason to postulate a special ambiguity.

The most pressing challenge I have encountered to this argument for our view comes from Ian Rumfitt (2003), who

has pointed out that French, like many Romance languages, naturally expresses knowing how via an apparent bare infinitive complement to the ‘know’ verb, as in ‘Il sait nager’. If we take Romance languages at face-value, this suggests that there is no embedded question construction in French. Assuming that ‘Il sait nager’ expresses the same proposition as ‘He knows how to swim’, by parity of reasoning, this would suggest that it would be wrong to analyze ‘He knows how to swim’ as involving an embedded question either.²

Responding to Rumfitt’s argument would involve delving rather deeply into the syntax of Romance languages, which I am not prepared to do on this occasion. But I will briefly explain what must be done to respond to Rumfitt, and why I think that the task is likely to succeed. To respond to Rumfitt, one must show that Romance language constructions such as ‘Il sait nager’ do in fact involve embedded questions, despite superficial appearances. One could approach this task in a number of different ways, which I shall not sketch here. But there are several reasons for optimism about success. First, though seem to be dialectal variations among my informants, there are Romance languages in which adding the question word ‘how’ and using the bare infinitive are synonymous (Portuguese and some dialects of Italian). Secondly, there are clear pragmatic explanations of the differences between using the question word and not using the question word, in those languages in which their use-conditions are distinct.³

But the most important reason to think that Rumfitt is incorrect is that, as he recognizes, his view has some extremely

2. Rumfitt also argues that in Russian ‘know how’ is translated by a verb that is not identical to the propositional knowledge verb used in Russian. However, I find this unconvincing. The word relevant Russian word is the translation for ‘to be able to’, rather than ‘know how’.

3. As Rumfitt points out, in French and dialects of other Romance languages, adding the explicit question word would convey something different than using the bare infinitive (perhaps that one is not able to perform the action anymore). But there is a clear Gricean explanation for why this should be so. In languages in which the apparent bare infinitival has become the norm, explicitly using the question word would be a violation of Grice’s maxim of manner (be perspicuous), which would give rise to an implicature (perhaps that one wasn’t really able to perform the action, for whatever reason). In languages in which the apparent bare infinitival use and the explicit embedded question can be used in the same circumstances, the two forms are in equally common use, and so the implicature isn’t generated.

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troubling consequences. In particular, it entails that the following sort of sentences are ungrammatical *in English*:

- (1) Kerry knows how and why to leave Iraq.
- (2) Hannah knows how to score a basket and when to do it quickly.
- (3) Frank knows how to swim and why to teach others to do it.

Rumfitt is committed to the claim that (1)–(3) are ungrammatical, because if ‘know how’ in English is a different verb than ‘know’, one that takes an infinite complement, then one should not be able to form conjunctions with ordinary question-embedding verbs, which require the normal verb, ‘know’. Rumfitt of course clearly recognizes this commitment, and claims that such constructions are *zeugmatic*, on a par with ‘Mary left in a flood of tears and a sedan chair’. But I submit that the position that sentences such as (1)–(3) are examples of zeugma is deeply implausible on its face. This suggests that the position that ‘know how’ in English is a verb that takes a bare infinitive complement, as ‘savoir’ appears to do in French, is deeply implausible.

Of course, as I have said, more work needs to be done to substantiate our argument. In particular, we need to show that constructions such as ‘Il sait nager’ are in fact question-embedding, despite appearances. But the problematic consequences that emerge from denying it provide some cause for optimism that the project will succeed.

So, practical knowledge, on my view, is a species of propositional knowledge. The thesis that semantic knowledge is practical is then the thesis that semantic knowledge amounts to knowledge of a way of doing something, entertained under a practical mode of presentation. So, for example, on this view semantic competence with term ‘cat’ might amount to knowing, of some way of using the term ‘cat’, that it is a way in which one ought to use the word ‘cat’, and entertaining that way under a practical mode of presentation. This is how I understand the notion of practical knowledge. Hornsby, however, introduces a special sense of ‘practical knowledge.’ According to Hornsby, practical knowledge is that sub-species of knowledge how to F, such that someone who possesses that knowledge is able simply

to F. As Hornsby emphasizes, many states of knowing how to F are not practical knowledge in her sense.

I do not think that semantic competence is practical knowledge in my sense. For example, I do not think that semantic competence with the term ‘cats’ amounts to knowing a way of using the term ‘cats’ correctly. I have nothing original to say about why I reject this thesis, only standard complaints. One worry that I find particularly persuasive, due to Heck (forthcoming), is that it is unclear that one can describe what it is to use ‘cats’ correctly in terms that do not attribute to the user of the term ‘cats’ the propositional knowledge that ‘cats’ refers to cats. If so, then learning to use the term ‘cats’ correctly presupposes acquiring the theoretical knowledge that ‘cats’ refers to cats, and so the claim that semantic competence with ‘cats’ amounts to using the term properly presupposes that semantic competence requires knowledge that ‘cats’ refers to cats.

So I do not think that semantic competence is practical knowledge, in my sense. But I am less sure whether semantic competence is practical knowledge in Hornsby’s sense, because I do not yet have a fluent grasp of Hornsby’s notion. The view I favour is the fairly standard one that semantic competence amounts to grasp of a compositional semantic theory for that language.⁴ Rather than challenging her claim that semantic competence consists in practical knowledge in her sense, I will adopt a different approach. In what follows, I first argue that her phenomenological considerations, even if correct, do not

4. One reason Hornsby gives for doubting that the model of semantic knowledge as knowledge of the bi-conditionals of a compositional semantic theory I find quite unpersuasive, and will not discuss it in the text. Hornsby seems to think that the biconditionals conflate knowledge we have as speakers, which is given only by one direction of the biconditionals, with knowledge we have as hearers, which is given by the other direction. As she writes, ‘But consider the two conditionals which compose a certain familiar bi-conditional belonging to a theory that may be supposed to serve as a semantic theory for English: (A) ‘Snow is white’ is true if snow is white; (B) Snow is white if ‘snow is white’ is true. (A) might be supposed to help answer the question *What is to be understood by an utterance of the sentence ‘Snow is White’?*; (B) might be supposed to help answer the question *What sentence is such that an utterance of it will be understood to say that snow is white?* So if language users really did need to know things like these, then it would seem to be (A) which served a hearer and (B) which served a speaker.’ However, Hornsby’s claim is incorrect. In our role as speakers, we need the knowledge given by the biconditionals, and in our role as hearers we do as well. For (A) alone is consistent with ‘Snow is white’ expressing the proposition that snow is white or grass is green, and (B) alone is consistent with ‘Snow is white’ expressing the proposition that snow is white and grass is green.

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undermine the view that semantic competence consists in large part of grasp of a compositional semantic theory. Secondly, I will question her phenomenological considerations.

II

Suppose that Hornsby is correct, and that we directly voice our thoughts. Does it follow that semantic competence is not explained by grasp of a compositional semantic theory? Hornsby's claim concerns utterances of sentences. According to Hornsby, when I have a thought, I simply voice that thought, via (but not by, in her technical sense) using a sentence that expresses it. But Hornsby does not deny that my ability to use that sentence to voice that thought comes from a mastery of the particular words used in that sentence, and their mode of combination. After all, it is my standing linguistic knowledge that gives me the ability to voice directly an indefinite number of thoughts.

So, I seem to have standing linguistic knowledge of the meanings of a set of linguistic items, and their modes of combination. In virtue of this standing knowledge, I am able to voice directly an indefinite number of thoughts. But this is not incompatible with the view that our ability to voice directly an indefinite number of thoughts is due to our grasp of a compositional semantic theory for our language. The phenomenology of genuine non-sentential speech does not suggest that we express individual concepts 'directly'.⁵ Rather, on the very rare occasions in which we are asked to express individual concepts, we must search for the word that expresses them. At the very least, a corresponding phenomenological claim to Hornsby's for individual words is not obviously plausible.

5. I am not here thinking of non-sentential speech in the sense of the debate about apparent non-sentential speech conducted in Barton (1990), Stainton (1995 and others), Stanley (2000), Merchant (2005), and Ludlow (forthcoming), where the issue concerns whether apparent non-sentential speech is really genuinely sentential. In that debate, all agree that apparent non-sentential speech can communicate (or express) propositions. I am thinking of the very rare uses of individual words simply to express concepts, without any intention of communicating propositions.

So, if we suppose that Hornsby is correct, and it is a phenomenological datum that we express our thoughts directly, it does not follow that it is a phenomenological datum that we express our individual concepts directly. So Hornsby's phenomenological claim about sentences is consistent with our grasp of individual words being explicated by knowledge of the biconditionals governing their meanings, of the sort familiar from compositional semantic theories. It would then seem that the best explanation of our ability to voice our thoughts directly is our standing knowledge of a compositional semantic theory for the words that compose the sentences we use. So Hornsby's phenomenological claim is not in tension with the claim that our use of language is explicable by our grasp of a compositional semantic theory; indeed, grasp of a compositional semantic theory might be the best explanation of this claim.

Hornsby's phenomenological claim has some initial plausibility. But the initial plausibility it has concerns our ability to voice our thoughts directly, via the use of sentences. It has considerably less plausibility when applied to our experience with individual words. But semantic competence, whether practical or theoretical in nature, is fundamentally a relation between language users, individual words, and syntactic structures. It is in virtue of our competence with individual words and understanding of modes of syntactic combination that we have whatever abilities we do with sentences. In the case of individual words (and modes of syntactic combination), there is no corresponding ability to do something, no ability simply to F. From Hornsby's phenomenological claim about sentences, it is unclear what conclusions follow about the nature of our semantic competence with their constituents.

On the familiar model I am suggesting, we employ our theoretical knowledge of the meanings of constituents of sentences and their modes of syntactic combination in producing sentences that voice our thoughts. I think Hornsby intends to respond to this possibility in Section IV of her paper. In that section, Hornsby argues 'A person who becomes conscious of features of her utterance which belong in a description of it that mentions the words she uses does not learn something available to her in her perspective as agent. So, I suggest, it seems.' However, I do not find her appeal to phenomenology

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here compelling.⁶ More specifically, insofar as it intuitively seems to me that I have agent's knowledge in Hornsby's sense of the thought I am voicing, it intuitively seems to me that I have agent's knowledge of the sentence I am employing to voice that thought. There is no difference from consideration of phenomenology alone that I can detect. Indeed, insofar as a sentence we employ can *fail* to voice the thought we intend it to voice (e.g. by failure of a use of a demonstrative expression to refer), we can have *better* and more immediate knowledge of the sentence we employ than the thought we actually voice (or fail to voice).

III

I have argued that Hornsby's phenomenological claim that we voice our thoughts directly is consistent with the thesis that we have theoretical knowledge of the parts of sentences we use to voice them. In what follows, I argue against Hornsby's phenomenological claim that we voice our thoughts directly.

I began this paper by arguing that there is a *prima facie* advantage to Hornsby's speaker-oriented route to the conclusion that knowledge of meaning is practical, over the more traditional hearer-oriented arguments that we simply grasp the content of utterances of sentences we hear. In particular, there is a problem for the latter sort of argument that is not obviously a problem for Hornsby. The sentences we hear almost invariably are either ambiguous or contain context-sensitive vocabulary. As a result, the thesis that it is a datum that hearers simply grasp their contents is on shaky footing. In contrast, the same worry does not apply to the sentences we ourselves employ as speakers. I do not need to make conjectures about which disambiguation of an ambiguous acoustical string I produce is intended by the speaker.

Despite this advantage, there are still numerous features of everyday linguistic practice that are in tension with the claim that we pay no attention to the sentences we use to voice our thoughts. Consider, to begin with, the case of *manner*

6. Also, this seems a rather over-intellectual claim to justify by appeal to phenomenology alone.

implicatures. A manner implicature is generated when I express a certain propositional content in an unnecessarily obscure or prolix manner (cf. Grice (1989), pp. 36–7). For example, instead of uttering the sentence ‘Hannah sang at the beginning of the concert’, I might utter the sentence ‘Hannah produced musical sounds or notes with her voice at the beginning of the concert’, thereby implicating something negative about her singing abilities. Here, the thoughts literally expressed are arguably the same, but by expressing the thought in the latter manner, I implicate something different than I would have in the former case. These are cases in which we clearly ‘choose our words carefully’, and are fully aware of using a certain sentence to convey a thought.

Of course, Hornsby’s claim is not the clearly false claim that we *always* voice our thoughts directly. Rather, it is the claim that in a central range of cases, for example cases in which we are not intending to implicate something, we simply voice our thoughts, and are not aware of the sentences we use in voicing them. But closer attention to the details of language use places any version of Hornsby’s phenomenological claim in doubt. For many expressions have normal felicity conditions that speakers need to believe are satisfied in the context before they use those expressions. In such cases, speakers need to reassure themselves that the context is so arranged as to allow for felicitous use of those expressions.

Consider the differing felicity conditions governing the following two sentences:

- (1) Which are you thinking of purchasing?
- (2) What necklace are you thinking of purchasing?

For example, suppose I am in a jewellery store with Frank. If I believe that Frank is currently attending to a set of necklaces, I can felicitously utter (1), and it expresses the same content that an utterance of (2) would have expressed. But I can felicitously utter (1) only if I believe that Frank is currently attending to a set of necklaces. In short, my choice of words is affected by my beliefs about the context, because different words are associated with different felicity conditions. My beliefs about whether the use of ‘which’ is legitimized by the background facts about the context of use rationalize my choice of words.

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Perhaps more examples are in order. As Strawson noted in ‘On Referring’ (1996, p. 228), felicitous usage of definite descriptions such as ‘the man in the brown hat’ is governed by what has become known in the linguistics literature as *familiarity*:

The difference between the use of the definite and indefinite articles is, very roughly, as follows. We use ‘the’ either when a previous reference has been made, and when ‘the’ signalizes that the same reference is being made; or when, in the absence of a previous indefinite reference, the context (including the hearer’s assumed knowledge) is expected to enable the hearer to tell *what* reference is being made. We use ‘a’ either when these conditions are not fulfilled, or when, although a definite reference could be made, we wish to keep dark the identity of the individual to whom, or to which, we are referring.

In order to use a definite description felicitously, a speaker must believe that the denotation of the description has already been introduced as a discourse referent, or that her interlocutor can figure out the denotation from other features of the extra-linguistic context. If these features of the context are not in place, the speaker must use an indefinite instead. So, in deciding whether to voice our thoughts using a definite description or an indefinite description, we need to know facts about the discourse context.

These observations have significance for the claim that we voice our thoughts directly. They show, for example, that before I utter ‘The man in the brown hat is a spy’, I must believe that ‘the man in the brown hat’ denotes something that has been previously introduced in the discourse, or is obvious to my interlocutors from extra-linguistic cues. If I do not believe it, I must instead utter e.g. ‘There is a man with a brown hat over in that corner who is a spy.’ Thus, in voicing my thought that the man in the brown hat is a spy via use of the sentence ‘The man in the brown hat is a spy’, I employ a bit of meta-linguistic propositional knowledge about the words I use. It is this bit of propositional knowledge that rationalizes my action of using the definite description, rather than the indefinite description. Similarly, felicitously use of ‘discourse linked’ expressions such as ‘which’ requires that I believe that there is a contextually salient

set available to my interlocutors for reference in the discourse context. The fact that we make these decisions quickly no more suggests that we do not thereby employ such propositional knowledge about the words we use than the fact that we act quickly suggests that we do not thereby employ propositional knowledge about our environment.

There are many different reasons one can have for uttering one of two sentences, both of which express the same thought. As we have seen, one reason might be to issue a manner implicature. Another reason might be that the felicity conditions of the expressions in one of the sentences have not been met, whereas the felicity conditions of the expressions in the other sentence have been met. A third reason is that use of one of the sentences might license a use of an anaphoric expression later in the discourse. For example, to modify an example from Evans (1985, p. 160), I might utter (4) rather than (3), because I wish to follow my utterance with (5):

- (3) John is a donkey-owner.
- (4) John owns a donkey.
- (5) Mary beats it.

Though an utterance of (3) and an utterance of (4) express the same thought, an utterance of (3) does not license use of the anaphoric element in (5), though an utterance of (4) does. Someone uses ‘owns a donkey’ rather than the synonymous ‘is a donkey-owner’, because she wishes to make subsequent anaphoric reference to the donkey, and recognizes (though she may not put it in these terms) that the expression ‘a donkey’ licenses such use, whereas the expression ‘a donkey-owner’ does not.

The moral of these considerations is as follows. If I merely voice my thoughts, then the vehicle by which I voice them should not matter. But there are many reasons to use one vehicle rather than another, and our linguistic behaviour shows that we are extremely sensitive to these reasons. If Hornsby’s phenomenological claim that we directly voice our thoughts were correct, then we would not be so clearly disposed to present them in the proper clothing.

There are no felicity conditions governing expressions in the language of thought (if such there be). I do not need to ensure

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that the concepts I employ in thought meet some prior discourse condition, in order to so employ them. By contrast, use of language is governed by felicity conditions. Many expressions carry with them such requirements.⁷ In following the rules governing use of these expressions, competent speakers possess meta-linguistic beliefs about them. This distinction between thought and language renders implausible the claim that in speaking, we are *simply*, in Hornsby's philosophically laden sense, voicing our thoughts.

In this section, I have raised some doubts about Hornsby's claim that in speech we voice our thoughts directly. I am conscious, however, that there are many caveats and complexities in Hornsby's paper that I may have missed. For example, at the end of her paper, in response to the general worry that we do often think about how to say what we say, she writes that 'One must not confuse the idea that we are able to simply voice our thoughts with the idea that voicing our thoughts is something that we *simply do*.' The subtle distinction Hornsby has in mind here is one that has no doubt escaped me, and perhaps some of the considerations I have adduced against her position are idle once this distinction is made perspicuous. However, theoretical nuance is not to the phenomenologist's advantage. The more guarded, complex and difficult to evaluate a claim about our phenomenology, the less plausible its status as a datum of phenomenology.

IV

I have spent the majority of this paper challenging the soundness of Hornsby's argument that knowledge of meaning is practical. I will end with some comments about the conclusion of her argument. Throughout the paper, but especially towards the end, Hornsby worries about the relation between the claim that knowledge of meaning is practical and the fact that our ability to use sentences is compositionally derived from our competence with their parts. I believe that her concern is justified, and that

7. There are many other examples I could have given to make these points, including semantic presuppositions and certain uses of complex demonstratives.

there is tension between the claim that knowledge of meaning is practical, and the productive character of linguistic competence.

The worry I have is that there is only one clear model that has ever been developed of the productive character of linguistic competence. This model involves attributing to speakers knowledge of the meanings of individual words, and the significance of syntactic structure. There is no other existing model for empirical language that explains its productive character. Those who maintain that meaning is use evoke the sort of reaction Dummett (1991, p. 163) has given to those who wish ‘to explain meaning in some quite different way which did not make use of the concept of truth at all’, namely ‘Such a project seems to be what Wittgenstein had in mind in the *Philosophical Investigations*, but whether this amounted to a denial that any systematic meaning-theory for a natural language was possible, or only to a proposal to build a totally new kind of meaning-theory, we are hard put to say.’⁸

Hornsby appeals to an analogy to help dissolve the apparent tension between the claim that semantic competence is simultaneously practical in nature and productive in character. The analogy is between knowing how to play trills on the piano and semantic knowledge. As she points out, someone who knows how to play trills on the piano possesses a structured ability, since they know ‘which notes to play *and* how to structure them.’ However, the problem with the analogy is that we have no corresponding analogy to playing notes in the case of semantic competence. Semantic competence with an individual word is not analogous to knowing how to play a note, since it is entirely unclear what practical knowledge (in any sense) semantic competence with an individual word would be. And even if we could describe a ‘use-property’ that was constitutive of semantic competence with an individual word, we would have no clear sense of how to combine use-properties of parts to obtain use-properties of a whole sentence. In contrast, there is no corresponding mystery about how those who know how to

8. Of course, no philosopher has thought harder than Dummett has about how to give an account of meaning that unifies the allegedly practical character of knowledge of meaning with its productive nature. His failure should probably be more instructive than is usually acknowledged (cf. Williamson (forthcoming)).

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play trills on a piano structure their competence in playing notes to form trills. So the analogy does not help dissolve the aura of mystery surrounding the claim that semantic competence can be both practical *and* productive.⁹

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