

ACCOMMODATING KNOWLEDGE

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1. *Knowledge as a speech norm.* Knowledge as a background norm for speech generally, for assertion in particular, and for free speech (e.g. Stalnaker, Williamson, Mill). Extend to implicit speech acts. (i) Knowledge is a norm, not just for assertion, but for a variety of knowledge-oriented speech acts, implicit as well as explicit. What sort of norm? A condition whose absence means (not a 'misfire', but) an 'abuse'. (ii) If knowledge is a norm for free speech, what matters will be knowledge-oriented speech acts (cf. Mill, Shiffrin). The importance of institutional, economic and material factors (neglected here).

2. *Knowledge in accommodation.* Attention to transmission and growth of information, and of common knowledge. Accommodation equally involved in transmission of ignorance, false belief, oppressive norms, ideology: through sincere assertions, misleading assertions, lies; also non-serious speech, including fiction and jokes; and through presupposition-introduction and other 'back-door' speech acts. Speakers routinely perform non-assertive speech acts which add purported knowledge to the score (unless blocked), and build shared common ground; including assumptions that e.g. members of certain groups are subordinate, are ranked as inferior, and are to be treated with contempt or discrimination. Process assisted by epistemic *normalizing* role of presupposition-accommodation, presenting what is presupposed as already-shared knowledge. Deep social dimensions to asymmetries of ignorance and knowledge (Fricker, Medina, Dotson, *inter alia*).

3. *Does knowledge follow rules of accommodation?* Napoleon might crown himself, and get authority if others acquiesce; but knowledge can hardly be got that way! Yet factors relevant to knowledge, to the ascription of knowledge, and perhaps to knowledge itself, do follow rules of accommodation, in ways that yield unjust losses and gains.

4. *Accommodation and knowledge loss*

4.1. *Knowledge and epistemic authority.* Credibility can follow a rule of accommodation (Lecture 2). Speakers can alter the epistemic standing of agents, whether of themselves or others, benefiting through inflation, or suffering through loss, of the credibility component of epistemic authority. When this involves third-personal distrust, it can damage someone's social standing as a knower. When it involves *first*-personal distrust, it can damage the agent's own knowledge. Examples: Streicher's anti-Semitic publications (*Der Giftpilz*); Marge in *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (Fricker, Dotson).

4.1. *Knowledge and standards.* Lewis argued that standard-shifting routinely follows rules of accommodation, whether for 'flat', 'hexagonal' — or 'knows'. Knowledge ascription (at least) tends to follow a rule of accommodation, shifting with the salience of skeptical possibilities that demand attention. The hate speaker and the pornographer undermine 'assurance' of safety and dignity (Waldron): posing skeptical hypotheses that cannot be properly ignored.

4.3. *Knowledge and stakes.* Knowledge ascription is sensitive to practical interests, or *stakes* (Stanley, de Rose, Hawthorne). (Knowing whereabouts of plastic/diamond ring.) Whether or not knowledge itself is sensitive to stakes, greater demands come with higher stakes. Agents may be less ready to self-ascribe knowledge, when more is at stake; and more ready to self-ascribe knowledge when the stakes are lower. In context of hierarchy this means, *ceteris paribus*: (i) Top dogs will more readily self-ascribe knowledge, given lower costs of being wrong. (ii) Underdogs will less readily self-ascribe knowledge, given higher costs of being wrong (Stanley). (iii) Top dogs will too readily self-ascribe knowledge of/about underdogs, since they matter less. (iv) Those who have least at stake will speak the most. Political implications of these factors.

5. Accommodation and knowledge gain

5.1. Knowledge and command

Something is said: 'Slave *is not allowed* to cross the white line'

Requirement: force is prohibition; slave is not allowed to cross the white line;

Master *knows* that Slave is not allowed to cross the white line.

Felicity Conditions: certain conditions hold, Master has practical authority, etc.

Outcome: force is prohibition; slave is not allowed to cross the white line; Master *knows* that Slave is not allowed to cross the white line.

Compare: 'Defendant is guilty' (Jury), 'Sentence twenty years' (Judge), 'Out!' (Umpire), 'Flares are out!' (Fashion guru).

5.2. Knowledge and prediction, with command

Something is said: 'Slave *will not* cross the white line'

Requirement: Illocutionary force is predictive assertion; Slave will not cross the white line;

Master *knows* that Slave will not cross the white line.

Felicity Conditions: Master also orders slave (5.1)

Outcome: Illocutionary force is predictive assertion; Slave will not cross the white line;

Master *knows* that Slave will not cross the white line.

5.3. Knowledge and social looping generics

Something is said: 'Men take charge, women are gentle and accommodating'

Requirement: force is assertion, plus presupposed verdictive or directive about prevalence, essence, or ideals; speaker knows that 'men take charge...' etc. on certain disambiguations

Felicity conditions: speaker's credibility, hearer's uptake, failure to block; social conditions that make it *no accident* that people do what is expected.

Felicitous outcome: force is assertive, verdictive, directive; e.g. 'men take *ought* to take charge, etc'; speaker *knows* that 'men take charge...' etc. on certain disambiguations.

Compare: descriptive norms 'Many households use a fan instead of an air-conditioner'. Also 'Investors are confident in Bank B', 'Our government is stable, and the people support us', 'Women lack the capacity to succeed in science at the highest levels', 'Boys don't cry'.

Note: anomalous direction of fit, comparable to 'maker's knowledge': not the sort that is the point of speech (Stalnaker) or free speech (Mill).

6. *Why it matters.* Knowledge loss can be part of injustice, and can mask injustice, as many social epistemologists have argued (4). Though perhaps less obvious, the very same can be true of knowledge gain (5).

Some Quotations

1. We have now recognized the necessity to the mental well-being of mankind...of freedom of opinion, and freedom of the expression of opinion [...] True opinion [held] as a prejudice... is not the way in which truth ought to be held by a rational being. This is not knowing the truth. Truth, thus held, is but one superstition the more, accidentally clinging to the words which enunciate a truth. (Mill)

2. The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e., the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. (Marx)

3. [The] beliefs of the powerful become [proven], in part because the world actually arranges itself to affirm what the powerful want to see. If you perceive this as a process, you might call it force, or at least pressure or socialization or what money can buy. If it is imperceptible as a process, you may

consider it voluntary or consensual or free will or human nature, or just the way things are. Beneath this, though, the world is not entirely the way the powerful say it is or want to believe it is.[...] If a woman is defined hierarchically so that the male idea of a woman defines womanhood, and if men have power, this idea becomes reality. It is therefore real. It is not just an illusion or a fantasy or a mistake. It becomes embodied because it is enforced. (MacKinnon)

4. The arrogant perceiver...coerces the objects of his perception into satisfying the conditions his perception imposes...He manipulates the environment, perception and judgment of her whom he perceives, so that her recognized options are limited, and the course she chooses will be such as coheres with his purposes... How one sees another and how one expects the other to behave are in tight interdependence, and how one expects the other to behave is a large factor in determining how the other does behave. (Frye)

5. News commentator (1972) '[Linda Lovelace is] Liberated Woman in her most extreme form—taking life and sex on her own terms.'

Charles Traynor: 'She was pretty dumb. So everything she did, she had to be told how to do it, when to do it, and why she was doing it, and how to dress, and it just kinda rolled along like that, y'know . . . it was always a matter of telling her what to do. [...] I was the dominant figure, she was a submissive figure, so if it reached the point where dominance had to take over, then dominance took over [...] If you argue to a point and somebody keeps pushing you, you know, fists are bound to fly. I don't mind somebody putting in their two cents worth, but I don't want them to argue with me to the point where I get upset or violently upset, and . . . yeah, that happened, on occasion. [. . .] I schooled her on what to say. Always sound sexy. Always look cute. Wink at the camera. Wink at the interviewer [...] Always be titillating. You'd rather be having sex than doing anything. Y'know, it was just schooling, teaching her what to say, how to say it, and when to say it.'

Linda Marchiano: ('Lovelace'): 'I was just like a robot, I was told what to say and I said it, because if I didn't I was beaten, brutally.' (Kermode and Levin)

5. How many women's hearts are vanquished by the mere sanguine insistence of some man that they must love him! He will not consent to the hypothesis that they cannot. The desire for a certain kind of truth here brings about that special truth's existence; and so it is in innumerable cases of other sorts...There are then, cases where a fact cannot come at all unless a preliminary faith exists in its coming. (James)

6. When a doctor says to a patient in the presence of a nurse 'Nurse will take you to the operating theatre', this may function both as an expression of his intention...and as an order, as well as being information to the patient. [...] Imagine someone directing a project, like the erection of a building which he cannot see and does not get reports on, purely by giving orders...His knowledge of what is done is practical knowledge. But what is this 'knowledge of what is done'? First and foremost, he can say what the house is like. (Anscombe)

7. [W]hen I make a choice, a question is resolved in the world by being resolved in my mind. That I am going to do something is made true by my representing it as true. So choice has the same direction of fit as belief but the same direction of guidance as desire: it is a case of practical cognition. (Velleman)

8. Of course, we do know why the man knows; we know that a powerful agent makes it happen that at the relevant time it is not at all accidental that the man is right. [Unger]

9. Consider the case of a subject, S, whose beliefs about the future are monitored by a supernatural being who, taking (for whatever reason) a special interest in minimizing falsity amongst S's beliefs, intervenes in the course of history so as to make these future-oriented beliefs of S true. Note that we do not suppose that S has the slightest inkling that this is going on. [...] The trouble is that the non-

accidentality pertains to a matching of the world to S's mental state rather than in the converse direction that befits a thetic [belief-like] attitude. (Humberstone)

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