

**ROUGH DRAFT**

## PRAGMATIC-EXPRESSIVIST SEMANTICS IN OVID'S POETICS

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Brandom, R. (2000). *Articulating Reasons*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

----- (2008). *Between Saying and Doing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fewer, Colin. (2008). “The Second Nature: Habitus as Ideology in the *Ars Amatoria* and *Troilus and Criseyde*”. in *Exemplaria*, Vol. 20, No. 3. pp. 314–339.

Hardie, Phillip. (1995). “The Speech of Pythagoras in Ovid *Metamorphoses* 15: Empedoclean Epos”. in *The Classical Quarterly*, Vol. 45, No. 1. pp. 204-214.

Lewis, D. (1986). *On the Plurality of Words*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Noë, A. (2012). *Varieties of Presence*. Ch. 2-3. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Nussbaum, C. (2007). *The Musical Representation: Meaning, Emotion, Ontology*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Peirce, C.S. (1955). “Pragmatism in Retrospect”. in *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*. Ed. Buchler. New York: Dover Publications.

Segal, Charles P. (2001). “Intertextuality and Immortality: Ovid, Pythagoras and Lucretius in *Metamorphoses* 15”. in *Materiali e discussioni per l'analisi dei testi classici*. No. 46. pp. 63-101.

## INTRODUCTION: CONTEXT, PROPRIETY, AND PHILOSOPHICAL VOCABULARY

The Augustan poets had at their disposal a vast storehouse of philosophical vocabulary, consimilar to their cache of both mythological and historical vocabularies. Vergil, for instance, had incorporated much of both the prevailing Epicureanism and the impending Stoicism of his age; the notion of philosophical appropriation in poetry as a defense against amphigory is superabundant in the aesthetics of Horace's *Ars Poetica*:

*Humano capiti ceruicem pictor equinam  
iungere si uelit et uarias inducere plumas  
undique collatis membris, ut turpiter atrum  
desinat in piscem mulier formosa superne,  
spectatum admissi, risum teneatis, amici?*<sup>1</sup>

It would not be a maggoty, vagarious extension of this perspective to maintain that the criterion of both how philosophical propriety should be applied to some regimented vocabulary when utilized for some poetical work and how its connection with the internal workings of nature were to be espoused. Clear evidence that such an extension was actually made emerges from an examination of Ovid's use of philosophical vocabulary. Ovid used at one time or another a wide range of conflicting philosophical doctrines. But it is futile to suppose that Ovid espoused a philosophical system. It would be much more fruitful to view each instance of philosophical vocabulary as merely *appropriate* to the context in which it appears, recognizing that for Ovid the employment of philosophical vocabulary is simply a premonitory, prognosticative integrant of poetic technique.

He resembled his Augustan predecessors also in that he did not restrict himself to the use of any one philosophy, but used a variety of doctrines without making any attempt to establish any consistency among them. In view of these facts it is here suggested that he had conceived of philosophy not as a perennial search for truth, but rather as a collection of doctrines which could

be effectively used on appropriate occasions. Philosophy would, below the Ovidian branch, cease to embody an argumentative drive toward discovering such truths, of solving *traditional* philosophical problems, instead becoming an expressive device, implying that there are problems to be solved which are not simply problems about the best way of describing phenomena. From the fact that there is no agreement about criteria for their solutions, it then appears as though Ovid's use of doctrines demonstrated that this is to be taken as signifying the difficulty of the subject matter, and not, as Horace may have held, as a perversity of method. Ovid reveals most clearly the purely expressive aspect of the philosophical process; while his predecessors surely were much more seriously concerned with the saliency philosophical questions purported to address the nature of things, Ovid's poetics construed truth-talk in terms of the practices of applying such-and-such a view given such-and-such a need.

In promulgating such an interpretation of Ovid's works, it is important, first of all, to examine his application of different philosophical doctrines in the service of meeting the propriety conditions of discrepant mythological, narrative, or hermeneutic contexts, evaluating passages in both his *Metamorphoses* as well as his love poems in order to – secondly – ascribe an anticipatory pragmatic semanticist attitude to Ovid's poetics; then it will be suggested that his semantic pragmatism may ably amount to an eschewal of the somewhat naïve assumption that private experience and one's semantic expressions somehow connect to the objective presence of a static world: a radicalized form of pragmatism about semantics, viz. *pragmatic-expressivism*.

## 1. EMPLOYING PHILOSOPHICAL VOCABULARY

As with so many characters, situations, poses, and motives that had become conventional in Roman love elegy, Ovid's poetics adopt the conventional attitude towards philosophical vocabulary, inverting it often to meet the needs of his different projects. Sole interest in the

expressive aspect of philosophical vocabulary would've rendered Ovid's appeal to an Epicurean cosmogony as well as to the chaos-based cosmogony a sort of perverse contradiction to a poet like Horace, for whom a rigid, robust truth was the goal of philosophical inquiry. In the case of the *Ars Amatoria*, II, 468-70, one is confronted with a statement about the origin of the creation explained in terms of the disposition of the three regions of the universe – the firmament with its nocturnal flames, its earth, and its sea:

*Unaque erat facies sidera, terra, fretum;  
Mox caelum impositum terries, humus qequore cincta est,  
Inque suas partes cessit inane chaos . . .*

Ovid's depiction of chaos as *vacant* suggests similarity with the Epicurean void, doctrinally held to be itself *inane*. A conspicuous difference between this account of creation and that found in Horace is that here the universe was formed by an intelligent mind. Furthermore, it is even more significant that Ovid makes the move of attributing the softening of man's hard nature to the power of love, introducing an Epicurean story of creation in this work so to harness its expressive purport for illustrating the power of love, and the mainstream contemporary Epicurean account for the original process of softening in the development of human life was therefore very appropriate to Ovid's theme. But only if the use of this sort of explanation is juxtaposed with another will the criterion of propriety enable one to explain the expressive plurality of his poetics.

Another occurrence of the creation story is found within the opening lines of the *Metamorphoses*, where Ovid is introducing the theme of the work, namely, *alteration*. In this context he finds it appropriate to stress this process from an original undifferentiated chaos to a universe of order and harmony. His animating idea begins with the forging of elemental constellations by an ineffable force:

*Sic erat instabilis tellus, innabilis unda,*

*Lucis egens aer: nulli sua forma manebat*<sup>ii</sup>

The apparent Epicurean view of permanent indestructible monadic components capable of resisting transmutation is here abjured, whereas the furniture of the stoic world readily mutate into one another is embraced; yet, although the doctrine of creation used by Ovid in the *Metamorphoses* has been referred to for convenience as Stoicism, there is no reason to suppose that Ovid abstained from blending the doctrines of various philosophical schools even within a single passage – that is, if such combinations were orthogonal to his needs. There is evidence, for instance, of some Lucretian and Empedoclean borrowings in the passage of the *Metamorphoses* just discussed. (See Segal, 2001: 64-5, 67. Hardie, 1995: 204, 214).

A much clearer example of the Ovidian technique to unite within a single context the vocabularies of varied doctrines may be found at *Metamorphoses*, XV, in the expounded doctrine of Pythagoras – just as wax, he says, easily assumes new shapes, and does not preserve its form unchanged, yet is actually the same thing, so the soul is always the same, but it passes into various form. Soon after, howbeit, Ovid gives his readers the Pythagorean doctrine of transmigration of souls. He extends the idea of change to include not merely souls, but all things whatever:

*. . . nihil est toto, quod perstet, in orbe.*

*Cuncta fluunt, omnisque, vagans formatur imago.*

*Ipsa quoque adsiduo labuntur tempora motu,*

*non secus ac flumen.*

This neo-Heraclitean bit of reasoning allowed Ovid to operate with the meta-philosophical impetus which he had required for his critique of metaphysically saturated ontologies. This also placed him in the position to assemble his critique of Augustan morality.

Both his binary structuring of axiological pedagogy, on the one hand, and his amatory themes, on the other, allowed his work to create an incongruous effect which immediately betrays the notion of a moral purpose. Such a curious perversion occurs, for example, at *Amores*, III, 11, where a contrast is made between a man's devout discipline and the infidelity and deceit of a mistress. He then proceeds to claim that the disciplined must avoid leisure. Hence it is safe to infer that Ovid borrowed from the moralists certain precepts about the cure of love, and that by so doing he could only be expected to lather his latter works with a pretense of serious moral purpose. This moral pretense, however, is throughout contrasted with the author's obvious partiality toward the passion he claims to be remedying. Or rather, he doesn't claim to be attacking love generally. He didn't recant his treatment of love as an art, which is subject to the expressions of its practitioners, but merely suggested the means of putting an end to a love that has become baneful and mentally dissonant. Here, then, are two instances of Ovid's adaptation of incompatibility relations amongst moral precepts to an end quite the opposite of that for which the philosophers of his day had intended them; this incongruity of ends and means, this quasi-serious treatment of a light and playful theme, does much to give his love poems a peculiar place within the pantheon of the great prosodic and poetic achievements of antiquity, and it is also what gives them their pragmatic quality.

## 2. OVID' POETICS AND SEMANTIC PRAGMATISM

Today, so-called "semantic pragmatists" hold one or another kind of "dual aspect theory" about the kind of sapient capability with which semantic contents intermingle. Roughly, these sorts of theorists think that grasping such contents is a matter both of knowing how some semantic-theoretic bit behaves during the process of inferring and also a matter of knowing how to apply appropriate concepts to things in its extension. Having a concept of *quadrilaterality* means

being able to do a little inferring (e.g., from *quadrilaterality* to *shaped*); and it's also being able to do a little applying (e.g., of either *quadrilaterality* or 'quadrilateral' to objects in conditions that are favorable for fitting the conditions of being a quadrilateral) – that is to say, semantic pragmatism insists on the priority of pragmatics (a study of the ways linguistic expressions are used) over semantics (a study of the sense and reference of linguistic expressions).

Semantic pragmatists, though multifarious in constitution, are usually believed to come in either of two main varieties. First, some consequences of semantic pragmatism have motivated some philosophers to conceive of the semantic pragmatist's thesis as an eliminativist one. *Eliminativism* is concerned with what its practitioners conceive as excess sentential and representational phenomena. For example, on this view large sub-classes of statements taken to be true are actually either systematically false or possess no cognitive content. The eliminativist contrasts the false statements of some language  $L$  to the claims of outmoded scientific theories in  $L$ , vouching for an elimination of those statements. But whereas the eliminativist compares the false statements in question with the claims of contemporarily obsolete scientific hypotheses, a second variety of semantic pragmatism – in part, because of a laxness concerning falsity in the eliminativist sense – derives its animating inklings from the notion that, in some language,  $L_1$ , false sentences function better than their counterparts in terms of use; further, the practices of making certain claims might be beneficial in some way, despite the fact that the claims concerned aren't literally true in  $L_1$ . If so, semantic theorists need not commit to a quest for sentences, propositions, or judgments constructed from bits of  $L_1$  which both bear truth and are true. But this does not mean that the conventions of judging and talking in  $L_1$  should be abandoned: there are uses for all manners of sentence-tokens, regardless of truth-value. These are the claims of *fictionalism*. These rather iron-fisted semantic pragmatisms demand a comprehensive account of

meaning in terms of use, whether in the name of either desuetude or preservation; so, perhaps the best way of expressing the core idea of semantic pragmatism is not by way of ambiguous demands of lexicological answerability to pragmatics, but by insisting that the fundamental semantic conceptual data can be ably elaborated using pragmatic vocabulary. However, its feasibility depends on what such a vocabulary would either look like or even how the use of its expressions may be both itemized and characterized.

The connection between both Ovid's poetics, to one side, and semantic pragmatism, to the other, hinges upon both his and the fictionalists' rejection of a two-pronged assumption about language: (1) that it is a medium for encoding sentential packets of factual information and (2) that these contents are all about some aspect of an objective, primarily inaccessible reality. Ovid's poetics suggest that his predecessors' earlier poetics had implied an account which hinged upon a bifurcation between (1) and (2), which retain (1) at the expense of (2). For this fails the poet and oppresses the milky, educated denizens of first light. As his corpus suggests, it is, rather, a pluralistic understanding of the role of content in any poet's poeticizing – or, that some account of concepts may be better off explaining those concepts' use which begins “with a story about the practice or activity of applying concepts, and elaborating on that basis an understanding of conceptual content,” the sort of narrative that submits “an account of knowing . . . that such and such is the case in terms of knowing how . . . to do something.” (Brandom, 2000: 4). These endorsements, that both nature and experience are to be understood in terms of the processes by which both relatively stable megagalaxies of habits arise and sustain themselves through their interactions with an ecosphere inclusive of the moorings of conflicting habits and semantic truth-properties simply do not sanction naïve impositions of one's aesthetic judgments upon the world.

Indeed the line of thought is one which seems quite worthy for explicating the genus to which both Ovid's poetics, to one side, and semantic pragmatism, to the other, belong.

But Ovid's poetics embody a radical third semantic-pragmatist thesis: "pragmatic-expressivism." So construed, Ovid's poetics parallel with the fictionalist point about semantics – namely, that some of the statements within one's background language will never to fill the brute roll of matching objective facts while simultaneously standing in isomorphic relations of sense, reference, and the like. Pragmatic-expressivists, however, hold that some of the utterances within the background language taken to be statements aren't genuine statements at all but have some other point or function, whereby the roles played by the expressions within a wider framework of linguistic praxis may be understood in a broadly functionalist vocabulary; while the fictionalist distinguishes between the useful and the literal (or, real), a pragmatic-expressivist doesn't feel the need to concede the existence of the sense in which some statement in the background language really impugns falsity. Taking some statement as false in this sense is to both commit a category mistake while also exhibiting a failure to appreciate what Nussbaum (2007) cites Katy as nominating the "feature-placing" aspect of language. (112).

A pragmatic-expressivist semantics is a sort of folk semantics – i.e. it endorses the notion that there is no point in committing to our over-flung, ambitious, and albeit pretentious metaphysical mistakes about language; this notion seems to account for Ovid's explicit disregard for the traditional notion of truth, particularly as correspondence. For it is in his works that the real world and the world of myth cross in a way that he presumed had crossed in an age which antedated his own, when real people got involved in real predicaments but acted in such a way as to provide a standard for later generations. This is a crucial move for his pragmatism, taking the elegists' conventional attitude towards mythology and inverting it, as in the following passage:

*nunc ego, quas habuit pinnas Danaeius heros,  
 terribili densum cum tulit angue caput,  
 nunc opto currum, de quo Cerealia primum  
 semina uenerunt in rude missa solum,  
 prodigiosa loquor, ueterum mendacia uatum:  
 nec tulit haec unquam nec feret ulla dies . . .*<sup>iii</sup>

One of pragmatic-expressivism's more extreme suggestions is that exegesis leads to a reformulation of the relationship between appearance and interpretation along semantic pragmatist lines, themselves relying upon what might be elaborated as a typological model of knowledge. The following passage forces the reader into confronting an explicit examination of just who has the right of appropriation, an issue pertinent to the study of the history of interpretation and myth – things of great rapport for the Augustan poetic tradition:

*et mea debuerat falso laudata uideri  
 femina; creduitas nunc mihi uestra nocet.*<sup>iv</sup>

This is typical of Ovid's cavalier attitude towards semantic-theoretic bits throughout the couplets which comprise the *Amores*. It is not enough to imply that when it is convenient for one semantic bit to be taken or treated as true, its truth status is thenceforth solidified – Ovid's text does not at all suggest that evaluative have the distinctive role that previous poets and philosophers had supposed them to; both Ovid's poetics and semantic pragmatism are suspicious of the bifurcation between prescription and description, but whereas the semantic pragmatist of the *status quo* defends certain intuitions about such a bifurcation Ovid's poetics sternly denigrate them.

Ovid's poetics attempted to neither exemplify nor preserve some manner of bifidity between the poles of the prescriptive-descriptive divide, implying a subtler view about what creatures who are decision-makers under uncertainty find it useful to tie their credences to a topic

suitable for consensus do or express. Applying the technique of exegesis as a sort hermeneutical *via media*, speakers then coordinate their credences. The objects of such ways of talking inherit their properties from the functional task to which such talk gives expression. What is distinctive about Ovid's uses of philosophical modicums is that in place of the doldrums of the prescriptive-descriptive bifurcation his poetics demonstrate that a unitary account of assertoric form, an account compatible with the idea that semantic expressions can be put to work in various and distinct ways, is more than mere apocryphal possibility.

There are two reasons for optimism about this aspect of Ovid's poetics. The first is that it doesn't seem too litigious about assertion's functioning as an apparatus of coordination, having only to invert the order of explanation between practice and semantic content, as when he describes the bedraggled state of his mistress at Book I, lines 11-18 of his *Amores*. But since his inversion lurks at a subterranean level, it does not follow that it greatly impacts one's notion of probability. Another, second, ground for optimism is the alignment of Ovid with what I take to be the most beneficial contemporary proposal for saying something substantial about the assertoric *tournure* of phenomenal content, as when his semantics seems so perverted as not to fit into context:

*sic nisi uittatis quod erat, Cassandra, capillis,  
procubuit templo, casa Minerua, tuo.*

Although Cassandra is rendered by Vergil with loose hair, Ovid chooses to describe her with her "priestly fillet" in place for no other reason than to render his own simile inappropriate, in order to make a joke out of the use of semantic exemplifications of any sort: an expression of mere child's play, to be sure. Ovid does not need to make any metaphysically scrupulous ontological commitments concerning the range of quantifiers over purported semantic (predicate) extensionality (as in this case regards Cassandra).

### 3. CONSEQUENCES FOR A MODAL SEMANTICS OF EXISTENCE

A related issue in the metaphysics of modality, involving some specific troubles with (modal) intuitions about both modal and natural language vocabularies, centers on a particular existential semantic conundrum; the conundrum itself rests upon the following argumentative structure: (P1) it is necessary that X is F; (P2) it is possible that X is non-existent; ( $\therefore$ ) it is possible that both X is F and X is non-existent. What seems most peculiar about this argument is that it is indeed sound, but is abhorrently irascible; while there have been several attempts on the part of metaphysicians to resolve this issue, semantic pragmatist literature makes possible a semantic resolution which nullifies any metaphysical need.

Two sorts of semantic responses have been proffered in order to meet the challenge head-on. The first case parallels the eliminativist position mentioned earlier. The proposal is that propositions concerning an object are neither true nor false if that object does not actually exist. According to this response, the paradoxical argument equivocates between a strong and a weak reading of modal necessity. In the strong sense, necessity amounts to truth come what may; in the weak sense, necessity is falsity come what not may. (P1) is only true in the latter sense, but (P2) is only true given an equivocally strong sense of the modal operator. So the argument, according to this particular semantic pragmatist response, is invalid. The second response assumes bivalence but distinguishes a genuine from a disingenuous sense of necessity. A proposition is necessary in the disingenuous sense iff it is true in all contexts (research programs). Relatedly, some proposition the intentional extension of which contains certain objects will be necessary in the genuine sense iff true in all contexts (research programs) in which such objects exist. The argument equivocates between the two senses along fictionalist lines. For (P1) is true only in the genuine sense, while (P2) is true only in the disingenuous sense. Neither of these responses seems

*prima facie* adequate in meeting the challenge: they rely upon implausible bifurcation theses. Nevertheless, a proper diagnosis must be semantic, as opposed to metaphysical.

A technical issue for an unmodified bivalent approach is that if one were to spell out semantic rules for operators expressing the qualified senses of necessity and possibility, these rules would have to make reference to the internal structure of sentences on which the operators play their roles. The idea is that when internal propositional contents concern certain objects, the value of the necessitation of some proposition hinges upon such objects. In orthodox lexeme semantics, propositions expressed with rigid expressions of reference will be determined as a function of the individuals to which those expressions refer, but the individuals will not be constituents of the proposition determined. Giving compositional rules for the genuine senses of necessity and possibility would require better elaborated propositions and new rules for all of the connectives and operators to ensure that the new values for the sentences were a function of the values of their components.

Ancillary issues center on a lateral theoretical crease. On the one hand, the explanation of the genuine sense of necessity seems to imply that it is necessary that X exists. But it seems implausible to suggest that there is any sense of necessity in which X exists necessarily. On the other, the second response seems unsuccessful when it comes to accounting for adequate reasons for supposing that (P1) is not to be accepted, under the disingenuous reading of necessity. On the first of the two semantic pragmatist responses, every sentence containing non-designators, without qualification, can be expected to fail to be true, while for the second, some sentences with names that don't designate will be true in a weak sense; so, even if X exists contingently, there are truths about X that are necessary in the disingenuous sense. Since this second response allows for some

predicates that do not imply existence, it needs an explanation for why the predicate of (P1) does: certain biological and chemical properties are, after all, *definitive*.

But this sort of issue cannot stick to a modified version of the second semantic pragmatist response, because such a modified version of some bivalent semantics may not be committed to any metaphysical bifurcation thesis about both the genuine and the disingenuous as applied to predicates. For the relevant distinction, given some modified second response, is between predicates and sentences, not between predicates and qualia. In some general semantics for a bivalent language, all predication sentences imply existence; so, those sentences are false when any of the singular terms to which the predicate is applied fail to have any nominata. Such a semantics would have complex as well as simple predicates, but if one's semantics allows for singular terms which fail to nominate, come what may, then one must distinguish predications with complex predicates from complex sentences with parts that are predications. For example, a bifurcation may be necessary between 'it is not the case that X is F' and the case of X not being F.

This sort of bifurcation neither involves focusing on nor even fabricating a distinction between the predicates as such, but on the notion of 'it is not the case that' as being a sort of sentential operator  $\nabla$  which isn't an integrant of the complex predicate. Furthermore, the claim that it is not the case that X is F amounts not to an application of the some predicate to X: it amounts to a rejection of a sentence that purports to ascribe property F to X; so, judgments of truth-value equivocate if F and  $\sim$ F are substituted for one another within relevant sentence-pairings. Neither F nor  $\sim$ F, then, need be assigned priority, particularly in order to distinguish between tokenings of either 'X is F' or 'X is  $\sim$ F' from those of either ' $\nabla$ (X is F)' or ' $\nabla$ (X is  $\sim$ F)'.<sup>v</sup>

So, on the modified thesis, one may get by with a vocabulary which combines two conceptually distinct semantic operations within the scope of one robust operator. But when the

language is enriched in various ways, and restrictive existential presuppositions are relaxed, there are other uses for complex predicates, and it is in any case conceptually clearer and more perspicuous to segregate the jobs that are fused in quantifiers. What is needed is one operator that forms a complex predicate from an open sentence which expresses a propositional function, with a separate mechanism for expressing the predicate on which it is operant applies to objects within the domain. If  $X$  is predicated as either  $F$  or  $\sim F$  then every object satisfies it simply by having a way of generalizing that to which the predicate in question is applied. In this traditionally expressivist semantic mode there is no suppositious metaphysical posturing; the correct diagnosis is not based on separating genuine necessity and possibility from disingenuous necessity and possibility, both of each operating upon sentential items: the correct move to make does seem, however, to involve rejecting (P1).

But even this modified thesis, too, runs into some trouble. For example, in property-talk, one must concede the essential existence of  $X$ , since  $X$  has the property of necessary existence. But this just seems like an example of the semantic-metaphysic conflation that the pragmatic-expressivist seeks to avoid. According to a pragmatic-expressivist semantics, by the lights of which any view that adopts such talk is to be eschewed, both quantificational vocabulary construction and its accompanying semantics say “what it is to *do*” in a perspicuous manner what it is when one is *saying something of something else*. (Brandom, 2008). In other words, the trouble lurks in both semantics and pragmatics, just not in any rigid metaphysical exploitation of both categories. Similarly with Ovid’s poetics and the case of philosophical vocabulary, the idea is to accommodate certain modal intuitions expressed in a natural language, citing the importance of the *use* of those modal intuitions, about how notions of such use may explain the semantic-metaphysic hybridization.

Restrictions placed upon the pragmatic-expressivist in linguistic practice differs depending upon whether or not there is explicit mention of existence. It is a familiar observation that to say of triangular prisms that they exist is not naturally understood as predicating existence of triangular prisms. In the quantificational mode, sentence-tokens like ‘All X’s exist’ are peculiar because they make a conflicting set of demands upon what one’s pragmatic suppositions must require. So there is plenty of precedent for the quantificational claims when the predicate involved is the existence predicate, for that predicate seems to fuse quantifiers in an awkward way. The role of these pragmatic suppositions in reasoning, and the way they interact with modals, predication, and existence claims rest upon the successes of a detailed explanation for the intuitive phenomena that lie behind the tensions of an ordinary modal semantics of existence.

#### CONCLUSION

Horace and Vergil, surely, were much more seriously concerned with traditional philosophical inquiry than Ovid, and for that reason their technique is less transparent. Yet the fact that they developed a method for utilizing to the fullest advantage their rich philosophical heritage is one of the utmost importance; for the skilful combination of philosophical doctrine with mythological accounts characteristic of Ovid seems to have been committed to the idea that eschewing certain philosophical locutions and problemata would not so much as lead to a perspicuous *philosophical* quietism, but a rigid *metaphysical* quietism.

This exercise has centered upon the proposal that Ovid’s poetics are still capable of leading anyone through the muck of certain hermeneutic conventions, providing the required nitty-gritties whence any assertoric account of phenomenal content may generate. It has been the assumption of the writer that this starting point offers a framework for speculation upon where, and how, words lead discursive beings both to and fro the world. Ovid demonstrated that one need not devalue

one's philosophical locutions and dispositions, but revalue those very locutions and dispositions, thereby possibly creating a more novel living way of life. Moreover, Ovidian poetics qua works of the poet himself emphasize the indistinguishable normative impetus of linguistic praxis, which is to claim that almost everything sapient creatures do is governed by rules or norms, whether or not maintained by power relations. Performances of linguistic creatures may either be done in consonance with appropriate rules or in conflict with such rules: the order of pragmatics to which semantics is answerable must be supposed normative; it cannot constrain the values which comprise its vocabulary to purely descriptive semantic-theoretic bits and provide an account of linguistic praxis as a Wittgensteinian activity of making various noises given Pavlovian circumstances.

Whatever constraint of this brood is endorsed, the pragmatic-expressivist may act with Ovid in implying that an endorsement assumes the invisibility of rather artful semantic rubrics of 'meaning', 'assertion', 'belief', and 'intention' (Brandom, 2002: 49). However, if pragmatics which is supposed to explain semantic properties of our linguistic expressions cannot be confined, even at the most basic level, to an account of our linguistic practice in terms of various noises made, but rather from the very beginning has to construe those noises as claims or assertions that are in given circumstances appropriately or inappropriately made then one seems to both elaborate and characterize those assertions from the very beginning in terms of their semantic properties. If this is indeed so, then the very idea of semantic pragmatism is erroneous. But this is where Ovid's works must be taken more seriously, particularly as philosophy in the guise of poetry.

Pragmatic-expressivist semantic theories must engage the problems which normativity poses this semantic pragmatist phylum – e.g. it is one thing to provide such an explanation, and quite another one to give an account of speech acts and their correctness in non-semantic terms;

yet, none the less, even if cognitive phenomena, for example, were extremely common and unquestionable, explanations in cognitive economy would merely support the idea of mutual interdependence between semantics and pragmatics, that is, their unavoidable entanglement, though it seems that in order to realize this ambition the strongest forms of semantic pragmatism – eliminativism and fictionalism – require something more than their pragmatic-expressivist brethren do, namely the most robust of explanatory reductions of semantics to pragmatics. Ovidian meditations may do philosophers a whole host of good on the semantic front, because in commonplace metaphysical packages some conceptions must be more basic than others, some views must underpin and support other views, and not the other way round: that is why the biased metaphysical analyses of pragmatics must be hemmed; it is why analyses of meaning and reference must be removed from the metaphysical assumptions of either truth-conduction or answerability. There is much more for today's pragmatists to do, let alone say, with regard to the anthropology of lexemic potables.

---

<sup>i</sup> *Ars Poetica*, 1-5

<sup>ii</sup> *Metamorphoses*, 16-7

<sup>iii</sup> *Amores* Book III, 13-18

<sup>iv</sup> *ibid.*, Book III, 43-44

<sup>v</sup> See Noë (2012) for a non-semantic construal which makes a similar point about predication.