lo þaye littel þier gar
bifoze þat þau ef bot
an hod
opon

halbe

þer lþedie
foz kalde

þe i þeþe
ouer þeus

þine beþen oth
þe þeþſt

Mark Amsler

The Medieval Life of Language

Grammar and Pragmatics
from Bacon to Kempe

The Medieval Life of Language

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from Bacon to Kempe*

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Abbreviations

CCCM	*Corpus Christianorum, continuatio medievalis*
CIMAGL	*Cahiers de l'Institut du Moyen Age Grec et Latin*
CMEPV	*Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse*
CT	Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*
CTMPT	*The Cambridge Translations of Medieval Philosophical Texts: Volume 1: Logic and the Philosophy of Language.* Ed. Norman Kretzmann and Eleonore Stump
EETS	Early English Text Society
Heresies	*Heresies of the High Middle Ages.* Trans. Walter W. Wakefield and Austin P. Evans
KGL	*Grammatici latini.* Ed. Heinrich Keil
LLT-A/B	Library of Latin Texts: Series A/B
ME	Middle English
MED	Middle English Dictionary
OE	Old English
OED	Oxford English Dictionary
PL	*Patrologia cursus completus. Series Latina.* Ed. Jacques-Paul Migne
SEP	Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Online: https://plato.stanford.edu/archive
TC	Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*
WB/F-M	*The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments, with the Apocryphal Books, in the Earliest English Versions Made from the Latin by John Wycliffe and His Followers.* Ed. Josiah Forshall and Frederic Madden. 4 vols.

Introduction: Where is Medieval Pragmatics?

Abstract

This book recovers pragmatics within the history of medieval linguistics. The introduction outlines the study of pragmatics from a critical history of linguistics perspective, situating language study in a complex social field and comparing medieval pragmatic ideas and metapragmatics with assumptions in contemporary pragmatic theory. Pragmatics embraces communication, expression, and understanding; it prioritizes meaning, context, affect, and speaking position over formal grammar. Relevant texts for late medieval pragmatics include grammatical and logical texts, especially those by Roger Bacon, Robert Kilwardby, and anonymous grammarians, and Peter (of) John Olivi. Other sources for medieval pragmatics include life narrative (Margery Kempe), poetry (Chaucer), and heresy records. Theoretical and everyday texts reveal provocative intersections of Latin and vernacular intellectual and religious cultures and different assumptions and ideologies concerning meaning, speech, and speakers. Across these heterogenous, sometimes antagonistic discursive fields, medieval intellectual history crosses paths with social history.

Keywords: critical history of linguistics, medieval pragmatics, pragmatics and semiotics, discourse theory

The history of linguistics and language study is a branch of intellectual history and an adjunct to the history of ideas. In modern times, histories of linguistics have usually adopted one of three approaches:

1 history of the development of "Linguistics" the discipline, as a sequence of Great Texts or Key Ideas from pre-Linguistics to present-day Linguistics (internal History A), or history of one or more developments within Linguistics the discipline, for instance, individual theories and terminology or a subfield or disciplinary paradigm (phonology, syntax,

comparative-historical linguistics, transformational grammar, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, L2 acquisition, etc.) (internal History B);

2   history of the relations between ideas about language and language study, not restricted to Linguistics the discipline, and other intellectual, political, and social ideas, sometimes incorporating a critical perspective on language ideologies, epistemes, paradigms, or dominant and minority discourses which determine what is "linguistic" (the stuff) or "linguistics" (the subject) (intellectual History);

3   documentary history presenting the development of Linguistics the discipline with anthologies of 'classic' texts, interviews, memoires, or summaries (docu-History).

Most histories of linguistics take account of grammar, philosophy of language, historical materials, and the like. Few, however, expand the textual archive to include literature or primary documents in social history.

Pragmatics has emerged as an important and productive subfield in Linguistics the discipline, but among historians of linguistics, pragmatics has been underrecognized. In this book I discuss pragmatics as an important aspect of premodern understanding of language and meaning. I focus on pragmatic ideas and metapragmatic thinking in theory and practice in late medieval Europe, especially in England and France. My general approach is aligned with critical intellectual History. I explore relations and influences between late medieval linguistic ideas of grammar and pragmatics and other social and institutional contexts and practices. My argument is that far from being marginal or underdeveloped, pragmatic ideas and metapragmatic awareness were important aspects of medieval thinking about language and communication in grammatical, philosophical, and religious discourses.

This critical historical analysis of medieval linguistics is informed by Foucauldian knowledge/power critique, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Conversation Analysis (CA), and close textual reading to explore pragmatic implications of intellectual discourse and textual representations. (For overviews of CA and CDA research and theory, see Van Dijk 1993; Wooffitt 2005; Wetherell 2012; Fairclough 2014. Cf. Foucault 1980, 1997; Bourdieu 1990.) Analyzing ideational and textual discourse from CA and CDA perspectives gives us sharper understandings of how "structuring structures" of knowledge, institutions, and power, the 'giveness' or *habitus* of thought behavior, supported medieval pragmatics and metapragmatic ideas. We will also see how explicit and implicit pragmatic ideas nourished medieval people's strategies for dissent and counter or alternate hegemonic discourse, manifested in texts representing both spoken and written discourse.

Between 1100 and 1450, pragmatic ideas and metapragmatic thinking were discussed and debated not only in Latin by scholars and other intellectuals, but also in some vernaculars, in particular English and French. Vernacular contexts for discussing pragmatic ideas and metapragmatic thinking included not only scholars but also lay people engaged in social and intellectual interactions outside education, usually in literature or in relation to religious authority (cf. Gramsci 1971: 5-23; Copeland 2001). Language use always implies pragmatic practice, but what I am referring to here are medieval pragmatic ideas and metapragmatic awareness as discussed, exploited, and revised by clergy and lay people, poets, devout religious, dissenters, and heresy hunters. Medieval pragmatics was part of intellectual and socio-cultural work on several levels, within different social groups, and often in contested contexts. Medieval pragmatic thinking was often at the center of strategies for securing discursive control or power or performing agency. From a critical intellectual History perspective, we discover late medieval pragmatics theory and practice to be constituted as a multilingual and multilevel *field* of individual, social, and institutional discourses. Some actors embody established intellectual subjects (*ars grammatica*, *dialectica*, *rhetorica*), while others participate in elite or official intellectual culture as it was appropriated for everyday or more local knowledge and experience. Some deploy medieval pragmatic discourse by referring explicitly to intellectual and theoretical concepts (*conceptus*, *affectus*, *intentio*, *equivocatio*, *sinceritas*, *suppositio*), while others work more intuitively or experientially with less disciplinary vocabulary, but with no less pragmatic sophistication in order to control, explain, or critique meaning-making. They interact pragmatically and strategically, express themselves as discursive subjects, or dissent from dominant institutional authority.

The objects in a discursive field or field of study are constructed by the metalanguage, strategies, and assumptions we use to organize and evaluate our talk about those objects. We construct the objects, give them names, then talk about the names and descriptions of those objects. Our languages about the physical world or visual art are complex; they are constitutive of what we know about the world or the art. For other subjects – I'm thinking of the history of linguistics, linguistics, literary studies, rhetoric, philosophy – the objects of study are primarily verbal. In those cases, the relations between metalanguage and object language are complex but in a different way. Computational and analphabetic systems of representation have been devised to represent language, but for the most part our ideas and theories about language have been articulated with language-based discourses which draw from the very objects being investigated and remake those words to serve metalinguistic,

conceptual, or critical purposes. This imbricated verbal condition is important for both the subject of this book – pragmatics – and how we talk about it.

Not all languages, however, produce or render up a metalanguage to describe them. The accepted language for any grammatical or linguistic description and evaluation occupies a privileged position within a cultural or intellectual context. Metalanguage has power, power to claim to know and power to promote, contain, or exclude what we claim to know. Like other forms of power, the power of metalanguage is asymmetrical. In modern and contemporary linguistics, European languages, especially English, French, and German, have provided the majority of metalanguage and discursive modes for language analysis regardless of the linguistic theory or perspective. In the European Middle Ages, Latin was the dominant language for intellectual discourse, the liberal arts, and *grammatica.* After 900 CE some grammatical writings appeared in a vernacular (Old Icelandic, Old Irish, Old French, Old and Middle English, Anglo-Norman [aka French of England], Welsh), but much of medieval linguistic work was composed in Latin and about Latin as a manifestation of *Langage*. In the early Middle Ages European scholars, almost all affiliated with the Church, adapted the Roman grammarians' models and discourse to discuss language. After about 1050 CE grammarians and philosophers began to construct a different sort of grammatical discourse, again mostly in Latin and about Latin as *Langage*. Some grammarians rethought medieval logic's vocabulary and concepts and redirected that discourse on propositions to more semiotic and ultimately pragmatic understanding. Their rereading of propositional logic in a semiotic framework informs a good deal of late medieval pragmatic thinking.

The terms *linguistics* and *pragmatics* were not used in the Middle Ages, but the ideas as well as inherent linguistic practices were. Intellectually, pragmatics, pragmatic ideas, and metapragmatic awareness were part of medieval sign theory and philosophy of language. Interpersonally and linguistically, they were active and critical parts of people's strategic use of language in everyday and elite spoken and written situations. Both spoken and written contexts are relevant for a critical history of linguistics. After 1100 CE pragmatic topics sparked the interest and challenged received linguistic ideas of grammarians and philosophers. Not only were pragmatic ideas and metapragmatic thinking foregrounded in some medieval grammatical and semiotic theory. They were also deployed strategically and reflected on in everyday, official, and poetic written discourse. Pragmatic ideas and metapragmatic awareness were often foregrounded in conflicts over religious orthodoxy, conformity, and dissent. As we will see, medieval pragmatics manifests the relations between medieval ideas about language and medieval social and religious identities.

By now, some readers are wondering what exactly do I mean by *pragmatic ideas* and *metapragmatic awareness*? In this book I use the term *pragmatics* to designate: 1) the study of language from the perspective of users and as it is used in practice and 2) the specific purposes and ways in which language users make meaning, understand expressions, create discursive topics, interact, and position themselves politically and socially. Functionally, the pragmatic field is comprised of text (what is said/written), position/stance (speaker/writer's intent, attitude to content), and interaction (who is addressed). Pragmatics embraces communication, expression, and understanding; pragmatics prioritizes meaning, context, and speaking position (not necessarily in that order) over grammar. The theory of pragmatics and metapragmatic awareness foregrounds our implicit communicative repertoires and tools for understanding the relations between what is intended, what is said, and what is understood. Consequently, our conventional pragmatic repertoires moderate the interactions and relations between speakers and listeners. In different texts and contexts, the speaker's discursive position and utterance distinguishes what are pragmatic theory, pragmatic practice, and metapragmatic thinking.

Pragmatics as a functional perspective aligns with semiotics and sociolinguistics and thus differs from more structural or propositional perspectives on language which align with grammatical and linguistic formalism. Pragmatics focuses on how speakers use or express linguistic, paralinguistic (gestures), and nonlinguistic (grunts, sighs) signs to make meaning, communicate, and interact in different social circumstances. In addition, metapragmatic awareness and critical reflection call into question naive notions of 'intention' with respect to what is said and what is meant. The inferred 'intended meaning' and the "illocutionary purpose" for which an utterance is articulated are constructed or contested in social interaction, but not by the individual speaker alone.

The history of linguistics depends largely on textual materials. Evidence for how verbal subjects and behaviors in the past were understood and represented is almost entirely textual. The available evidence and materials for medieval pragmatic theory, pragmatic strategies, and metapragmatic awareness are no different (although some visual art evidence is relevant) (cf. Jucker 2000). Relevant texts for the history of late medieval pragmatics include grammatical and logical treatises and commentaries, especially those by Roger Bacon, Robert Kilwardby, the grammarians known as Pseudo-Kilwardby and Magister Johannes, and Peter John Olivi. But pragmatics as part of medieval culture exceeds a definition of 'intellectual' restricted to elite or dominant culture. Gramsci makes the point directly: "although one

can speak of intellectuals, one cannot speak of non-intellectuals because non-intellectuals do not exist" (1971: 9). The critical archive for the history of medieval pragmatics also includes chronicles of institutional power and surveillance, life-writing by men, women, and religious dissenters, letters, literature, and translation theory and practice. Grammars and treatises on the philosophy of language are familiar materials for the history of linguistics. But other kinds of texts are just as relevant to histories of linguistics when we are searching records of people's social and linguistic understanding and participation in social life. Medieval grammars and logic texts get special attention from historians because they 'look' like the subject *Linguistics* as determined by how the field has been defined in modern times. For the history of medieval pragmatics, however, we need to look beyond the explicitly grammatical and philosophical archive and attend to texts and contexts belonging to other discourses and cultural domains. A social or critical intellectual history of linguistics is much like the history of a language. Relevant evidence and materials include not only grammars, textbooks, and official discourse but also evidence for everyday use, language attitudes, metacommentary, social or linguistic controversies, and representations of linguistic ideas or use. Some poetic, institutional, and everyday texts relevant to medieval pragmatics reveal provocative intersections of Latin and vernacular intellectual and religious cultures and sometimes show speakers' different assumptions and ideologies about meaning and speech and the people who are speaking. In this study of medieval pragmatics, I read across these discursive fields, where medieval intellectual history crosses paths with social history. We encounter some striking and sophisticated linguistic and pragmatic thinking about meaning-making and the value of ambiguity, the trouble with vagueness, and struggles for agency, even survival, in contested circumstances.

As a perspective on the history of medieval linguistics, my approach to the study of post-1050 pragmatics is expansive and critical, in line with what is sometimes referred to as the Continental or European approach to pragmatics and historical pragmatics (e.g., Traugott 2006). The broadly cultural Continental approach is often opposed, theoretically and historically, to a narrower Anglo-American perspective founded on speech act theory (cf. Levinson 1983: 2, 4-5; Verscheuren 1999: 1; Mey 2001: 3-35; Taavitsainen and Jucker 2010). The Continental approach emphasizes utterance and discourse and draws its methodology from propositional analysis, sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, and semiotics. The so-called Anglo-American approach typically restricts itself to the propositional analysis of what is said and what is meant from the speaker's point of view, the anchors of speech act theory

and analysis. For the Continental approach and in this study, speech act theory and analysis are one part but not the only or most important part of pragmatic understanding, both historically and theoretically. Uptake or the consequences of speech and the ideological constructions of speech and performance contexts are also crucial for pragmatic understanding. A socio-semiotic approach to pragmatics theory and pragmatic practices, including text analysis, enables us to better explore medieval pragmatic practices and theories both for their alterity and as a reusable past.

Pragmatics matters for the history of medieval linguistics and language thought because pragmatics focuses our attention on the particularity and constitutive power of context. Pragmatic theoretical analysis interrogates the conditions for communication and the ways meaning can be communicated or understood even when meaning does not map directly onto the utterance's surface form. Pragmatics also investigates how speech or interactions can be and are understood differently by speaker and listener depending on each participant's presuppositions, goals, and contextual or institutional constructions for situating speech and action. Shared understandings make communication possible, but not all interactions maintain shared understanding. Pragmatics is first and foremost language in use, but pragmatics is also a perspective on language, a way of thinking about language as social activity and as subject formation and positioning. Pragmatics is intimately involved with broader issues of agency, cooperation, and struggles for discursive power. Pragmatics and metapragmatic awareness perform and foreground how linguistic forms and structure are used and contextualized in order to make, control, or change meaning for different speakers' purposes. Contemporary pragmatics investigates meaning and communication in several ways, especially with respect to implicitness, speech acts, deixis, face (politeness, impoliteness), constitutive contexts, social consequences, and nonverbal interaction. Pragmatics involves social constructions of discursive space. As we shall see, medieval pragmatics theory and understanding considered such questions, but often deployed a different metalanguage and addressed these topics with different, sometimes conflicting assumptions, not all of them 'modern.'

Pragmatic theory and practice have been largely omitted from broad surveys of the history of linguistics. Among major histories (internal History A), R. H. Robins' standard survey (1967/1997) mentions pragmatics just once, in the final chapter in a paragraph devoted to the post-1950 interest in semantics. Vivien Law's *The History of Linguistics in Europe: From Plato to 1600* (2003) stops at Early Modern linguistics and doesn't mention pragmatics at all. Nor does Holger Pedersen's much earlier and influential *Linguistic Science*

in the Nineteenth Century (1924 in Danish, 1931 in English); the Neogram-
marians' theory did not account for extraverbal contexts. Hans Aarsleff
(1982) mentions syntax, etymology, semantics, and comparative philology
as topics in the history of linguistics but not pragmatics. Julia Kristeva in *Le
langage, cet inconnu* (1969/1981) adopts a structural-semiotic approach to the
history of linguistic ideas. She devotes a chapter to "La pratique du langage"
(1981: 275-291), but mostly discusses rhetorical speech (*oratoire*) and literary
writing. Unlike Robins and Kristeva, Margaret Thomas' *Fifty Key Thinkers
on Language and Linguistics* (2011), a succinct version of internal History
A, reflects the modern orientation to pragmatics. Thomas includes entries
for philosophers and linguists who have made important contributions to
Anglo-American pragmatics (Grice, Searle, McCawley), but pragmatics and
medieval linguistics do not intersect in her episodic survey. Anthologies
of key linguistics texts and oral self-histories (docu-History) from North
American linguists collected in the *First-person Singular* volumes (1980,
1991, 1998) likewise maintain a strong disciplinary focus. If we believe those
linguists' self-accounts, twentieth-century linguistic intellectual work had
little or nothing to do with pragmatics. That's definitely not the case for
European linguists. For most broad surveys of Linguistics the discipline,
pragmatics belongs to whatever is called 'modern' linguistics.

In the history of linguistics, intellectual History surveys blur the line
between Linguistics the discipline and general intellectual or cultural
history. The historiographic texts by Chomsky (3rd ed. 2009, first published
1966), Kristeva (1981), and Andresen (1990, 2013) are 'critical' to the extent
they connect linguistic theories, ideas, and practice with philosophical
traditions and nationalist, ideological, and institutional formations, but
they offer varying degrees of persuasion and evidence. Many intellectual
historians of linguistics are interested in precursors as well as ruptures in
knowledge frameworks (for example, Padley 1976, Kristeva 1969/1981, Aarsleff
1982, and Swiggers 1997). But again, these surveys say little or nothing about
theories of pragmatics. They take the subject to be a modern component of
the discipline but not a genuine part of linguistics' past.

Some historians of linguistics, however, have recognized that pragmatics
has a past. Their work and the significance they attach to pragmatics for
the development of linguistic ideas challenge us to rethink the history of
linguistics. I'm referring especially to Brigitte Nerlich (2006), Andreas Jucker
(2012), Jacob Mey (2013), and in more depth, Nerlich and D. D. Clark (1996)
and Irène Rosier (1994, 2004, 2010, 2016). Although most of these studies
remain within a disciplinary framework for linguistics and pragmatics,
they don't always restrict themselves or the subject to a presentist focus. In

particular, Rosier's work and the contributors to the special issue of *Vivarium* (2011) devoted to medieval pragmatics make important contributions to our historical and intellectual understanding of medieval pragmatics and medieval linguistics. But there is more to pragmatics history when we look beyond Linguistics the discipline and philosophy to other social discourses and contexts.

Mey and Jucker construct a post-1800 history of pragmatics in order to show how pragmatics has become an important subfield in contemporary linguistics. Jucker has been one of the most prolific theorizers and promoters of history of pragmatics and historical pragmatics research. But he maintains a pretty hard distinction between the history of linguistics and historical pragmatics research. His historical pragmatics work has focused on late medieval and early modern pragmatic uses and strategies for politeness, pronouns of address, and so forth in literary and social texts. But when Jucker turns to the history of linguistics, he adopts a more linear disciplinary perspective. In his survey "Pragmatics in the history of linguistic thought" (2012) he states: "I shall take a broad view on both these issues by including not only pragmatics *avant la lettre* but also a brief and necessarily selective account of the development of the discipline itself by adopting a broad, basically Continental [European] view of pragmatics ..." (2012: 496). But Jucker's chapter focuses almost entirely on disciplinary linguistics from 1830 to the present, despite his advocacy of the Continental approach to pragmatics. When he says that pragmatics "is still a relatively young branch of linguistics" (2012: 495), his presentist disciplinary assumption means that he effectively rules out medieval pragmatics. In his sketch survey, *avant la lettre* becomes a very short period of time indeed. Jucker briefly notes the relation of pragmatics *the field* to semiotic theory, in particular, the work of C. S. Peirce (1839-1914) and Charles Morris (1901-1979), and he notes pragmatic thinking before the late nineteenth century with a few sentences about classical rhetoric. However, despite his interest in the "broad ... Continental view" of pragmatics, Jucker restricts his brief history to pragmatics' role in the construction of the modern discipline of Linguistics and how pragmatics is part of a paradigm shift from formal to functional linguistics (2012: 503-505).

Jacob Mey (2013) similarly elides medieval pragmatic theory and ideas and metapragmatic awareness in his sketch of the development of pragmatics. Like Jucker, Mey has been a strong advocate of the Continental approach to pragmatics. At first, his distinctions among "Early Origins of Pragmatic Thinking," "Recent Pragmatic Ancestry," and "Modern Approaches" hint at a more complex historical view of what the field of pragmatics includes and

has included. Mey helpfully discusses what he calls *pragmatic thinking*, not just the *discipline* of pragmatics. Nonetheless, his brief narrative is short on historical and critical analysis. Using terms like "origins" and "approaches," Mey emphasizes the longevity of the "pragmatic turn," but he keeps to the disciplinary frame with respect to the history of linguistics. He restricts his historical perspective on linguistics to intellectual discourse as purveyed by contemporary linguistics and philosophical theory (Austin, Grice, Searle), foundational for much contemporary pragmatics and semantics. While Mey suggestively links ancient philosophy, rhetoric, and linguistics with a pragmatics thread, he discusses the Sophists only briefly and medieval philosophy barely at all. He acknowledges the relation of pragmatics to semiotics but dismisses Peirce's "rudimentary pragmatic insights" outright (2013: 589), apparently because he believes Peirce's semiotic pragmatics is fundamentally different from linguistic pragmatics. (It's not, or at least needn't be.) Mey recognizes a few pre-1900 developments and an historical perspective which looks beyond the contemporary discipline of linguistics, but he ends up partly reiterating the Anglo-American approach to pragmatics by calling contemporary speech act theory the core of 'proper' pragmatics. This move is curious given Mey's critique elsewhere of the limitations of speech act theory for pragmatics theory (e.g., 2001: 104-105). Mey implies that with every pre-Frege, pre-Wittgenstein, pre-Austin, pre-founding father of pragmatic thinking, we inch closer to the sunlit present of understanding, glimpsing but not yet fully seeing the "modern pragmatic truth about language," a truth revealed only in the contemporary discipline of pragmatics, that there is no language prior to utterance and no meaning prior to use (2013: 589).

Nerlich and Clark's book-length study (1996) is the most generous of the historical accounts of post-1700 pragmatics. Their expansive historical view of language study, linguistics, and pragmatics is a kind of antidote to Pedersen's triumphalist account of the Neo-grammarians. Nerlich and Clark reconnect modern pragmatics with Kant (1724-1804) and early twentieth-century philosophies of subjectivity, meaning, language, and truth. They stress the theoretical and disciplinary significance of Kant's notion of *pragmatisch* and his distinction between practical reason (the "pure" kind) and pragmatic reason (the "empirical" kind). Their historical arc positions Kant as an important progenitor of modern pragmatics and rebuts Searle's off-the-cuff dismissal of Kant as having any place in a genealogy of pragmatics: "You can't go and find Kant's view on apologizing or congratulating, as far as I know" (1984: 25). Still, Nerlich and Clark, like Mey and Jucker, manifest a modernist and disciplinary approach to pragmatics theory and history of

linguistics (internal History B). When they take note of pre-1800 pragmatic ideas or theory (e.g., Aristotle, the Stoics, or Kant), they represent those insights as intimations of future adequacy rather than as fully accredited linguistic pragmatics or metapragmatic understanding within a specific sociocultural and intellectual context.

Most historians of medieval linguistics and philosophy adopt internal History A/B or intellectual History approaches. Julie Andresen (1985) has identified the comparison of theories approach as one of the principal strategies for presenting historicized accounts of linguistics. In histories of medieval linguistics (internal or intellectual History) the comparison of theories approach is embodied in narratives of the shifts from early medieval and Carolingian word-based grammar to post-1100 Priscian- and dialectic-influenced or syntax-based grammar to Humanist rhetoric and the recovery of classical models of Latin expression. The comparison of theories approach also shapes the continued interest in the influence of the *grammatica speculativa* on other theories of grammar in the late Middle Ages and on the description of pre-speculative and post-speculative periods (e.g., Kneepkens 1983, 1990, 2013; *Studies in Medieval Linguistic Thought,* ed. Koerner, Niederehe, and Robins [1980]).

Despite these limitations, some scholars who adopt intellectual History approaches argue the importance of the role of pragmatics in medieval intellectual history and ideas about language. The history of medieval pragmatics challenges those received versions of medieval linguistics which emphasize grammatical theory, pedagogy, and philosophical commentary. Some historians of medieval philosophy and intellectual culture have explored the relation of linguistics to philosophy and pragmatics to semantics (notably, Gabriel Nuchelmans [1988] and the contributions to the *Vivarium* 2011 medieval pragmatics issue). Nonetheless, some of these scholars, though not Nuchelmans, describe pragmatic signification or meaning not as constitutive, but as an "intrusion" into the domain of proper propositional or logical form. That is, they regard pragmatics as a separate domain from logic or proper propositional form (e.g., Mora-Márquez 2011; cf. Passnau and Toivanen 2018).

In the history of medieval linguistics, sign theory holds a special place for the scholastics, not only those associated with the *grammatica speculativa* but many who oppose them as well. Aristotle and Augustine's theories of signs were formative for several not entirely compatible strands of linguistic and semiotic thinking in the schools. Exploring the significance of sign theory in medieval theories of language and mind, the collections of essays in Umberto Eco and Costantino Marmo (1989) and Eugene Vance and Lucie

Brind-Amour (1983) and Marcia Colish's influential *Mirror of Language* (1968/1983) brought together semiotics and cultural criticism, although not necessarily with a pragmatics focus. This research set new directions for later scholars and historians of linguistics. Some scholars directly connect medieval sign theory with pragmatics, in particular, Sten Ebbesen (e.g., 1977, 1980) and Rosier (1994, 2004, 2010). They have argued for the importance of pragmatics for more fully understanding medieval linguistics, semiotics, and semantics. Focusing on scholastic methodology and the apparatus of speech analysis, Nuchelmans (1988) and Louis Kelly (2002) have worked out some of the complex relations between scholastic grammar, logic, pragmatics, and theories of *actus*.

Some historians of medieval philosophy of language situate pragmatics within the scope of medieval ideas about true and false propositions, syllogisms, and criteria for formal analysis. However, Rosier takes a different approach based on the thirteenth-century shift toward Aristotelian theories of language and intention. She specifically argues that medieval pragmatic ideas belong to the history of medieval linguistics. Rosier's influential work sets post-1050 grammar broadly in relation to philosophical and theological theorizing. Her studies of syntax and pragmatics rely on important archival research and bring new manuscript evidence to the study of medieval linguistics. Rosier's *La parole comme acte: Sur la grammaire et la sémantique au xiiie siècle* (1994) sets pragmatics within grammatical theory. In that work and elsewhere (Rosier 1983, 1996, 2004, 2010, 2018) she draws on philosophical and theological discourses to argue that medieval 'intentionalist' grammarians and their pragmatic and semiotic orientation to language and usage have profound implications for ideas and attitudes about language in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. Rosier's groundbreaking research does much to fill in the theoretical gap between the Stoics and Kant that we find in other histories of pragmatics.

However, Rosier relies primarily on grammatical and philosophical texts, which shows some of the limitations of the comparison of theories approach to the history of linguistics (internal History A/B, intellectual History). An intellectual history of linguistics, however broadly conceived, often remains at the ideational level of grammars, treatises, and similar high theory texts. This is not unlike the "history of ideas" approach to intellectual history associated with Lovejoy (1948), which rests on the assumption that "unit ideas ... which have long life-histories of their own" (1948: 9) can be recognized, described, and analyzed in different historical and cultural contexts (science, philosophy, literature, education, etc.) as part of intellectual history. The comparison of theories approach to the history

of linguistics is significant in that it can clarify how a particular theory of language constructs objects identified as "linguistic" or is embedded within an ideology or episteme with its own assumptions and ideologies. But the comparison of theories approach only really works if we do not accept uncritically the present model for what is "linguistic" as the criterion for comparison. A second problem is that focusing on theory and theorizing as a distinct mode of discourse gives primary attention to philosophical and grammatical theory texts as the basis for a history of linguistics as part of intellectual history. Sometimes this theory preference is not implicit at all. Anat Biletzki, for instance, claims that the "traditional disciplines of grammar and rhetoric are first candidates for such research [on the history of pragmatics], but it is in philosophy – and specifically, philosophy of language of the past – that true pragmatics is unearthed" (1996: 455). Grice and Searle would no doubt agree (but without Kant). I'm not sure how much Rosier would.

My approach to the history of medieval pragmatics in this book is different. Grammatical theory is fundamental for understanding medieval pragmatics, but a history of linguistics is more than theory. There's theory and practice and metaunderstanding in between. In this book I read out a *critical* history of linguistics. I explore linguistic and grammatical ideas and practice in various medieval discourses, not only linguistic, semiotic, and philosophical theory but also discourses situated in other intellectual, institutional, and social contexts, including life-writing, poetry, and accounts of dissent recorded by Church authorities and dissenters themselves. Not exactly "history from the ground up," as social historians often say to characterize their work, but not altogether different either. I focus on languages of knowledge/power, implicit meaning, strategic language, and discursive conflict, recognizing and examining where a cultural hegemony supporting agreed-upon signification, meaning, and communication modes begins to fracture, multiply, or disseminate beyond itself in alternate hegemonies of dissent. In these alternate spaces, expression, agency, and understanding are called into question and resubjectified by secular and religious authorities and also by counterhegemonic and alienated voices. A critical history of linguistics or medieval linguistics should make manifest structures of knowledge and the ideological and power relations in dominant theory and ideas as well as the implications of praxis for both hegemonic and counter or alternate hegemonic practice. Ideas about language and pragmatics do not belong only or even primarily to grammarians, linguists, and philosophers. They are part of everyone's implicit working knowledge and metaunderstanding of language as they use and perceive it (cf. Gramsci 1971: 5-9). The recent

emergence of the history of missionary linguistics in the historiography of linguistics has helped clarify the complex relations between linguistic description, linguistic theory, social ideology, and material history and foregrounded how people's constructions of linguistic 'knowledge' take different forms in different areas of society. Lovejoy's "unit ideas" often belong to the elite Western world of philosophical and theological discourse, but linguistic knowledge was and is distributed and constructed across social, historical, and geographical spectrums, however unevenly. Our objects of historical inquiry are constructed by the language and assumptions of the inquiry itself and also by the twin challenges – resistance and insistence – of materials of the past, if we recognize them *as* historical materials. They challenge and test our assumptions about what we know and the authority we presume we have to know them.

So, this book situates pragmatics in two medieval contexts. Scholastic philosophy, logic, and semantics shaped medieval ideas about language and communication in significant ways. At the same time, later medieval pragmatic thinking and metapragmatic awareness were also embedded in other social contexts and discursive practices besides grammar and semantic theory. Medieval Christianity's *doxa* and institutional authority had a direct impact on medieval pragmatics, but ideas about pragmatics were as much influenced by philosophy of language, philosophy of mind, and other intellectual concepts, especially as received from Aristotle and Augustine. Pragmatic competence is part of any linguistic community and also individual speakers' competence and interactions. Pragmatic *ideas*, on the other hand, form part of the intellectual and social culture which gives language its formal intellectual presence over and above concrete practice. That is, ideas are part of social practice. In addition to intellectual culture, medieval pragmatic thinking was embedded in and sometimes constitutive of religious controversy and dissent, life writing, poetics, Bible translation and other social contexts. The history of medieval pragmatics outlined in the following chapters historicizes theory and explores how pragmatic and metapragmatic thinking intersects with and informs many sociocultural discourses, texts, and understandings. This sociocultural exploration of medieval pragmatics also shows how those ideas and practices informed and produced people's attitudes toward agency, subjectivity, and sociability. The field of late medieval public discourse was heterogeneous and multilayered, and pragmatic theory and practice reveal how and how much dominant discourse and hegemony were contested by and with competing voices.

I take a broad interdisciplinary view of the history of pragmatics as the study of how language use has been part of theorizing and resolving

intellectual and everyday social problems. Medieval pragmatic ideas and metapragmatic awareness manifest in various contexts: philosophical and grammatical analysis, people's linguistic and communicative repertoires, social interactions, structures and ideas of power, literary and cultural representations. These discursive contexts are intellectual, poetic, official, personal, cooperative, or antagonistic. Comparing intellectual, artistic, and controversial texts, we can critically reflect on the linguistic and social implications of different sorts of knowledge discourses, how they inform representations of identity and social status, and how they inscribe power or dissenting relations. As part of a critical history of linguistics, we also ask: For all the differences, what in that past can we reuse and how?

The analyses of texts and ideas in the following chapters emplot a discursive history of late medieval pragmatics conceived as a "field of fields" (Bourdieu 1990: 66-68). In this sense, a *field* is not a discipline or academic subject. Rather, a field is a social space into which people are thrown and which is maintained or regarded as coherent by collective *habitus,* behavior, discourse, and belief, which manufacture and reproduce the conditions by which the field perpetuates itself. A *crisis* emerges when (some) people challenge the dominant discursive practices of a field, calling into question the assumptions and identities by which the field has maintained itself as a social formation. Through alternate or counter-hegemonic practices, groups imagine, create, or invent a socially recognizable new field whose autonomy threatens (antagonizes) an existing one.[1] Pragmatic thinking depends in part on the "unthought presuppositions that the game [of the field] produces and endlessly reproduces" (Bourdieu 1990: 66). Pragmatic strategies and metapragmatic awareness enable people to reimagine and manipulate existing social interactions and relations, unpack occluded intention, and make and remake social groups and agency. That is, pragmatics is at once part of the *habitus* and part of the transformative potential inherent in the field. Whereas "historical pragmatics" focuses primarily on language change (e.g., pronouns of address, insults), the history of pragmatics focuses on the relations between theory and practice in intellectual and everyday discourses in one or more historical periods. As with any critical or historical inquiry, uncovering and foregrounding people's thinking with and thinking about pragmatics depends on where we look and how and why. Looking outside language study per se does not mean we are looking beyond linguistics or beyond language and certainly not beyond human

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1   On the critical and discursive potential of *antagonism* and *crisis* for producing change in social space, see Laclau and Mouffe 2000:79-131.

experience. For communication and language analysis, context is everything but sometimes hard to pin down.

This book is organized into three parts. Each chapter addresses one or more key topics in the history of medieval pragmatics: meaning, *intentio*, *sinceritas*, expressive form (including grammar, ellipsis, indirectness, figurative language), *equivocatio, affectus*, *suppositio*, politeness, cooperation, dialogism, discursive power. Chapters sometimes overlap or are in dialogue with one another in that they discuss pragmatic topics in different kinds of texts or discourses or treat pragmatic ideas as they emerge among different social groups.

In the first part (Chapters 1 and 2) I take up medieval grammar, philosophy, and literature in relation to semiotics and theories of language structure and pragmatics. I discuss medieval ideas about interjections and elliptical expressions as they bring to the fore pragmatic perspectives and the role of *affectus* in the theory of language. Chapters 1 and 2 discuss grammar and pragmatic thinking in the schools after 1050. Although they did not use the term *pragmatic,* Roger Bacon, Peter (of) John Olivi, and others proposed powerful and far-reaching theories of language and meaning in pragmatic and social contexts. The thirteenth-century grammarians Rosier refers to as 'intentionalists' pushed out the parameters of grammar and logic as received from the Late Latin grammarians and twelfth-century commentators and articulated semiotic theories of language from a pragmatic perspective. The grammar, status, and expressivity of interjections became a topic for rich theorizing and pragmatic analysis. Some thirteenth-century grammarians focused on the role of *affectus,* feeling, and emotion in expression and expanded the idea of verbal meaning to include both cognitive and affective signification as understood in specific contexts. Priscian (*Institutiones grammaticae,* 2.15) had provided some structure for the contrast between assertive sentences referring to substances and nonassertive sentences signifying mental dispositions. Interjections and other kinds of emotional expressions became a launch pad for interrogating meaning making and double articulation within a grammatical system and for rethinking signification, reference, and affect in terms of disposition and interpersonal rather than only intention-based semantics.

The second part (Chapters 3 and 4) reveals how many of the pragmatic ideas in scholastic grammar and philosophy were revisited or reflected in practice in late medieval English vernacular texts by Chaucer. I address the pragmatic role of context and dialogue in Chaucer's poetry and prose with an analysis of the functions and significations of the Middle English interjection *allas*. I discuss Chaucer's *Miller's Tale* as an encounter with

grammatical theory and pragmatics more generally, for comic and satiric effect to construct identity and affective power.

In the third part (Chapters 5 and 6) I discuss medieval pragmatic thinking and pragmatic awareness as they emerge in and shape narratives of dissent and social or institutional conflicts by Bernard Gui, William Thorpe, and Margery Kempe. Grammatical theory and literature were not the only places where pragmatic ideas and metapragmatic awareness were productive or contested. Thorpe and Kempe's writing shows that people's thinking about how language is used to define, express, control, and resist also informed how they pragmatically and metapragmatically constructed their speech or writing for social survival and asserted subjective authority and agency in asymmetric social or institutional interactions. Medieval grammarians' and logicians' concerns with reference and *equivocatio* (ambiguity, polysemy, vagueness) were reinterpreted in controversies about how heretics and nonconformists talk in institutional situations.

Chapters Four, Five, and Six use critical discourse analysis (CDA), conversation analysis (CA), and Bakhtin's theory of *dialogism* to elicit speakers' pragmatic and metapragmatic understanding implicit or explicit in representations of talk between narrative characters and between medieval inquisitors and dissenters or reformers. The life writings of Thorpe and Kempe reveal sophisticated strategic uses of *equivocatio* and modality as metapragmatic practice. Gui's account of heretics' speech suggests that such pragmatic understanding was part of official knowledge. Both inquisitors and dissenters display pragmatic and metapragmatic understanding of what participants are doing, but from different standpoints as they struggle for discursive control. CA and dialogism set pragmatic thinking in a sociolinguistic frame. Institutional discourse about disobedient or transgressive speech becomes an historical source for our understanding of pragmatic and linguistic knowledge.

Linguistics or grammar or pragmatics is a discourse or field situated in a social context. A history of linguistics is a history of discourse in different social contexts. The history of linguistics can, or should be, a critical practice informed by critical discourse analysis and analysis of broad social and intellectual fields as contexts. A critical history of linguistics contributes to a socially-informed and nuanced perspective on the contemporary discursive formation called *Linguistics* and the orders of language, knowledge, authority, and subjectivity from which it has emerged. With semiotic and textual analysis, we can retrieve and critically examine pragmatic ideas and understandings and metapragmatic awareness embedded in medieval texts composed by people from different social and discursive groups.

Medieval pragmatic theory and thinking and metapragmatic awareness have important connections with contemporary pragmatics, not least around notions of implicitness, speech acts, power, and context. But medieval grammarians did not necessarily draw the boundary between semantics and pragmatics or between linguistic and nonlinguistic vocalizations in the same way linguists and philosophers today might. While we have inherited a good deal of linguistic metalanguage from ancient and medieval grammarians, earlier grammarians and linguists used those terms in ways and for reasons which are not necessarily our own. Their analyses of speech contexts and meaning reveal a sophisticated grasp of the nuances of dynamic contextualization, making meaning on the fly, as it were. Moreover, linguistic ideas were part of people's intellectual, cultural, and intuitive repertoires for participating in the active life of the society, whether officially, playfully, poetically, or under coercion.

A critical history of linguistics doesn't assume that all linguistic knowledge is captured in grammatical or linguistic theory nor that 'proper' pragmatics is relevant primarily for how interlocutors cooperate with one another to achieve a shared goal in a reasonable way or achieve the enlightened view that language in use is language *tout court.* One of the continuing claims in this book is that pragmatic understanding manifests the embodied connection between reason and emotion, between act and habit, between intention and reception, in interpersonal communication. Implied meaning is not necessarily always cognitive. Conversational conflict and antagonistic constructions of agency, polysemy, or coercion reveal as much about pragmatic thinking as does the analysis of successfully interpreted indirect communication or the achievement of reasoned consensus. Grice (1975) argues that communication depends on speakers finding agreement on shared goals and flexibility with respect to the designated speaker's intentions and illocutionary purposes. It's no argument that cooperation and shared understanding are essential strategies and values if we hope to make society more just or gain richer, more inclusive understandings of human experience. But those aims are not the be-all and end-all of pragmatics nor of social interaction or even of communication. Recognizing motivated conflict or legitimate difference also goes a long way toward beginning to create a just or cooperative society. Antagonisms and alternate hegemonies are as much part of that struggle as is cooperation. Pragmatics, antagonisms, and power emerge together, but not always with the same force in the same direction.

Intellectual history and the history of linguistics can contribute to the work of critique by asking how giveness has come about and why what

goes without saying needs to be spoken. A critical history of medieval linguistics, linguistic ideas, and pragmatics shows us some of what we have retained and also what we have left out from the past we inherit, the past we acknowledge, and the past we assume or repeat without question. The history of linguistics also shows us some of that past, the past as Other, the one we didn't even know we could inherit. Historicizing our situation entails making the past relevant by asking what in the past is reusable and for what purposes. A critical history of linguistics, medieval or otherwise, can effectively and thoughtfully intervene if and when it contributes to a broader understanding of idea formations and their consequences as social practice. As a critique of ideology, the history of linguistics can offer a grounded knowledge of possibilities and experiences which can help destabilize repressive knowledge/power relations in institutions or in our social interactions and futures.