It is often very enlightening to examine what other people in other times have had to say regarding the nature of language and how to go about studying it. Unfortunately, we're usually so busy trying to keep up with the current literature that we feel we don't have time to go back and read old and forgotten classics. But in foregoing acquaintance with our predecessors, we are the ones who suffer.

Linguistics, if I may speak optimistically, is emerging from a period of gross historical amnesia: after--embarrassingly--having reinvented many wheels and fundamental insights, linguists are beginning once again to recognize the value of the works of preceding generations. The inflated claims so often heard in the past two decades of new truths emerging with each notational variation are finally losing their seductive power. In the years ahead we may look forward, I hope, to a more scholarly, less childishly exuberant linguistics. In this brief paper, I would like to present the overview of an unknown American tradition in the study of language in its social context that I think has great relevance for the field which we call today 'sociolinguistics'.

Sociolinguistics has not been exempt from the ahistorical practices of the modern social sciences. "Contemporary sociolinguists are apt to forget that science is both a strenuous historical enterprise and an impressive historical achievement" (Aracil 1978: 3). As with political revolution, a new intellectual endeavor frequently feels the need to announce its programme as constituting a radical break with its competitors and the past. In proclaiming its originality and separating itself from the antisocial paradigm of Theoretical Linguistics, sociolinguistics has been--perhaps necessarily--self-serving in its historical shortsightedness. However, with its growing recognition and stature in the field, it is now in a position to examine its past with greater breadth and objectivity. Furthermore, in its continuing and not yet successful search for a comprehensive theoretical vision, sociolinguistics may find these earlier approaches fruitful and instructive.

Sociolinguistics, we are told in the standard accounts and accepted histories, arose as an identifiable pursuit during the 1950's and early 60's, between the sterile mechanism of the late
Structuralists and the equally sterile formalism of the early Transformationalists. This, of course, is not accurate: the British under J. R. Firth had already been practicing 'sociological linguistics', which significantly they also called General Linguistics, since the early 1930's. American linguists, unfortunately, have on the whole never taken the trouble to understand the Firthian theories. More importantly, even the first American contributions to the study of language as social behavior came not from modern sociolinguists but from the much older and venerable tradition of Pragmatist philosophy--from the works of John Dewey, George Herbert Mead, Arthur F. Bentley, and Grace Andrus de Laguna.

The fundamental tenet of this tradition, found in the works of these scholars from the early 1900's to the early 1950's, is that language is a mode of social action, a means of coordinating human interaction, and that it is to be understood in and through its social contexts. It is a broad vision, placing language in the context of human behavior and interaction as a phenomenon inseparable from life and living, and it constitutes the indispensable groundwork for any viable general theory of sociolinguistics, old or new.

The pragmatic approach is essentially monistic, social, and practical. One of the first of the ancient shibboleths to be discarded was the notion that the purpose of language is the expression of inner thoughts and ideas. As de Laguna wrote, "To assume that this is its original and fundamental function is hopelessly to intellectualize it, and to divorce it, as something merely external, from the essential business of living and thinking. Speech must be envisaged as effecting something vital in the practical life of men, as performing some objective and observable function" (1927: 10). The most important purpose of language is the furtherance of social order and social functions--that is, the maintenance of life.

The term 'objective function' is an important one. Many scholars, Durkheim and de Saussure among them, had noticed the social character of language. What was lacking, and what is one of the greatest contributions of this Pragmatist linguistic tradition, was the conception of the social function of language, in which the function of language--as well as its structure--is regarded as an objective social phenomenon (cf. de Laguna 1927: 124). Meaning, the essence of language, is not seen in dualisms of signifiés and signifiants or trichotomies of sign, sense, referent. The meaningfulness of language is the way it functions in human affairs. "Speech is the great medium through which human cooperation is brought about. It is the means by which the diverse activities..."
of men are coordinated and correlated with each other for the attain-
ment of common and reciprocal ends" (de Laguna 1927: 19). As Hall
characterizes Dewey, "Language gives rise to socially shared activ-
ity, to participation, and this is meaning" (1928: 464). 
"Meanings
are objective because they are modes of interaction" (Dewey 1925:
190). Meaning is the rule, comprehensive and persisting, the stan-
dardized habit, of social interaction, and for the sake of which the
language act occurs (190). It is the interrelations holding between
the situation, the persons involved, the noise or written symbol,
and the consequences of social coordination. Dewey's distinction
(191) between proximate and ultimate meanings is an important de-
lineation between the specific and particular circumstance [the
context of instance] and the broader and more useful generalization
of the typical and recurrent [the context of situation]. (The dis-
tinction is explicit also in Firth (cf. Firth 1957a, Catford 1969),
whose terminology I have included here in brackets.) The treatment
of meaning which it frames constitutes a significant theoretical
and methodological advance. It dispenses with the naive objection
that contextualist theories must forever be rooted in the parti-
cular, and it effectively describes the daily process of abduction
and abstraction in real language, in which meanings are detached
from their original contingencies of occurrence and placed in new
contexts—whether of events or of other meanings.

"Language is always a form of action", it is the "tool of
tools", and "in its instrumental use is always a means of concerted
action for an end" (Dewey 1925: 184). "Language is ultimately a
form of behavior and calls for the rationally organized society
within which it can properly function. It implies common ends, and
common ends are ipso facto rational ends" (Mead 1938: 518). The
sound, gesture, or written mark involved in language gains meaning
—becomes a word—"when its use establishes a genuine community of
action" (Dewey 1925: 184-185; see also Mead 1934: 79). It "gets
its meaning in and by conjoint community of functional use" (Dewey
1938: 46). Reference to such conjoint functional use shows that
"there is no such thing as a mere word or mere symbol" (47). "A
sound or mark of any physical existence is a part of language only
in virtue of its operational force. This fact is evident and di-
rect in oral communication. It is indirect and disguised in writ-
ten communication. Where written literature and literacy abound,
the conception of language is likely to be framed on their model"
(48). We may observe that modern theoretical linguistics is
certainly no exception.

The traditional approaches of separating meaning from action,
form from content, signifier from signified, that (still) infest
linguistics, philosophy, psychology--these are shown to be inadequate and inappropriate. The weaknesses of these dualistic conceptions lie not only in the fact that they are metaphysical, as de Laguna (1927: 14-15) observes, but more importantly in their insuperable sterility for the study of language.

All this requires a new approach to the study of language--a new linguistics. As de Laguna wrote, "What is needed is a fresh conception of speech as an essential activity of human life, fulfilling an indispensable function in the economy of life" (19).

Such a view of language has several important consequences. It makes any inquiry profoundly social, rather than individual; observational rather than introspective; human rather than formal and abstract. Such things generally known as proposition, reference, relation "are human living, human behavior. They are to be taken situationally, interactionally, rather than personally, actionally" (Bentley, letter to Dewey, 30 May 1942, in Ratner & Altman (eds) 1964: 106). The idea of individual presupposes the idea of the social context and environment in which the individual lives and acts--and without which he would not--as Dewey stated in his early and extremely important paper on "The reflex arc concept in psychology" (1896). The individual is an abstraction; the individual without a social context is a fiction.

This is clearly expressed by Mead, who bases his concepts of the self and the mind on the logical and ontological priority of environment and social process (1934: 222ff). "All living organisms are bound up in a general social environment or situation, in a complex of social interactions and interrelations upon which their continued existence depends" (228). It is this context which shapes their 'characters' and their behaviors, and it is of course in this greater context that they must be studied. It is unthinkable for the Pragmatists that it should be otherwise; in fact, such a fundamental premise is so self-evident that one wonders how linguistics has been blinded to it for so many years. Further, language is the most important means of socialization--of turning the inescapable social bondage into productive, cooperative interaction.

It is difficult to overemphasize the importance of 'context' and situation for the pragmatic view of language. "It is very important to recognize that language never completely loses its dependence on context" (de Laguna 1927: 108), not even in written language or scientific symbolism. "Context is irrevocably there. In the face to face communications of everyday life, context [...] is taken for granted, not denied, when it is passed over without
notice. It gives point to everything said [and] forms the arbiter of value of every utterance" (Dewey 1931: 92). Dewey (89-90) quotes with enthusiastic approval from Malinowski's famous essay: "In the reality of a spoken living language, the utterance has no meaning except in the context of situation" (1923: 307); and continues, "We grasp the meaning of what is said in our own language not because appreciation of context is unnecessary but because context is so inescapably present. We are not aware of the role of context just because our every utterance is so saturated with it that it forms the significance of what we say and hear" (90).

Perhaps the most important concept regarding context and language in the pragmatic theories is that, as in the Firthian view, language is not separate from context, it is part of it. All the relevant aspects are taken together—the participating individuals, their relevant experiences, the acts and objects of perception and communication, the consequences and results—these are all presented as distinguishable but inseparable aspects of the behavioral whole. Within a theoretical framework, it is of course possible to break these parts down for the purpose of analysis and description, but as they present themselves to the observer, there are no such boundaries, neither between language and context nor between the individual and his environment. As A. N. Whitehead (1938) said, "We are in the world, and the world is in us." Phonic or written substance is no more a delimitation of language than the skin is the delimitation of the individual. It is significant that Dewey and Bentley (1949a: 141-142) devote a long and approving footnote to a very similar statement of this position by J. R. Firth: "In dealing with the voice of man we must not fall into the prevalent habit of separating it from the whole bodily behaviour of man and regarding it merely as a sort of outward symbol of inward private thoughts. Neither should we regard it as something apart from what we all too readily call the outside world. The air we talk and hear by, the air we breathe, is not to be regarded merely as outside air. It is inside air as well. We do not live just within a bag of skin, but in a certain amount of what may be called living space, which we continue to disturb with some success" (1937: 19-20). The section from which they quote begins, "Let us begin by regarding man as inseparable from the world in which he lives", and is titled, "Speech, One Component of Situational and Bodily Behaviour as a Whole" (19).

Within so broad a perspective, context and situation are no easy matters. The key is the word 'relevant'. It was never the intention of contextual theories to include in the study of language in context everything in the world. This was an invention
of Bloomfield, and later of Katz-Fodor-Postal-Langendoen and that group. In a pragmatic theory, only those things that are relevant need to be considered; these can then be studied in the framework of various types of linguistic, social, cultural, physical, and psychological contexts: the context of experience, the context of perception, the linguistic context, the context of shared presumptions, antecedent states, spatial and temporal contexts, consequences and results, and so on (de Laguna 1927: 108-109; Dewey 1931: 94, 98-103). The concept of relevance--so indispensable for any practical, meaningful scientific endeavor--permeates their methodology and finds explicit statement in their theory. Such a criterion is in fact the only practical means of conducting an inquiry: to exclude context is unreal and yields artificial results; to include everything in the world is impossible. There is, of course, no mechanical algorithm or decision procedure which will separate 'relevant' from 'irrelevant', nor does there need to be, for the lack of a mechanical or a priori means of demarcation does not in any way vitiate the inquiry. The discrimination must be made ad hoc within the context of each problem; the bases for it will be built up inductively by the analyst through sustained interaction with the theory and the data.

For Dewey in particular, the problem of context was more than just a linguistic question, for he saw it not only in terms of language itself, but as an indispensable component in all thinking, philosophic, scientific, and otherwise. "What is true of the meaning of words and sentences is true of all meaning" (1931: 90). He says in "Context and thought" that "the neglect of context is the greatest single disaster philosophic thinking can incur" (98). He finds overgeneralizations and unwarranted claims in science and philosophy to be frequently nothing but the "logical" extensions of theory that result when context is suppressed in the process of theory-building (94-96, 104). And he warns that those who ignore context, whether by default or by design, must bear in mind that they are excluding just "that inclusive and pervasive context of experience in which philosophical thinking must, for good or ill, take place, and without reference to which such thinking is in the end but a beating of wings in the void" (110).11

Though elaborated differently according to the specific interests of the individual, the fundamental views on language discussed above are common to all four of these thinkers. At this point, in a study in the history of linguistics, it is necessary to examine the historical context of their work and to answer, if possible, how it was that these four came--largely independently--to share such a remarkable consensus of thought.
It is perhaps misleading to discuss these scholars as if language were their central concern. Generally, it wasn't. John Dewey (1859-1952) is perhaps the broadest and greatest thinker the United States has ever known; his interests and contributions extend from logic to education and from psychology to aesthetics. Somewhat more focused, George Herbert Mead (1863-1931) and his work in education and the development of mind and self in society pioneered the field of social psychology. Arthur Bentley (1870-1957) began as a political theorist and spent much of his long life probing the theoretical and methodological foundations of the social sciences. Even Grace de Laguna (1878-1978), the only one of the four to devote an entire book to questions of language, thought of herself primarily as a metaphysician. As a result—with the exception of de Laguna—the linguist will look in vain for a self-announcing, systematic theory of language and linguistic inquiry in any of their works. Rather, their writings on language must be found in the contexts of their wider scientific and humanistic concerns. It is in many ways these wider concerns which make their sometimes sketchy, frequently programmatic observations on language so fertile and so valuable for contemporary linguistics. And it is precisely many of these broader concerns that current linguistic theory needs to infuse itself with in order to achieve the social and scientific relevance it still lacks.

It is not entirely accurate to speak of these four as a group. Their works are bound together by a commonality of thought, both in questions of language and in their far broader approaches to matters philosophic, psychologic, and sociologic. Only occasionally, however, was this union of thought complemented or influenced by personal contact and mutual friendship. Intellectually, Dewey is perhaps the central figure in the quartet, though by virtue of his contributions to Pragmatic philosophy and functional psychology and not by any position he might have had as teacher or mentor to the other three. Head of the Department of Philosophy, Psychology, and Education at the University of Chicago from 1894-1904 and then Professor (later Emeritus) of Philosophy at Columbia University until his "retirement" in 1939, Dewey was the leading figure in American philosophy and almost a household word for students throughout the world. His first discussion specifically on language came as a chapter in his book *Experience and Nature* (1925), presaged by his review of Ogden & Richards in 1924 and followed by several rejoinders and amplifications. Thereafter, questions of language and context occupy a central, though rarely autonomous--in the ways a linguist would like to find them--place in his studies. The pragmatic, functional approach to social
behavior, of course, was present in his thought from a much earlier period. Bentley, who had attended a seminar of Dewey's around the turn of the century (without, however, making his personal acquaintance), reflects this pragmatic, functional position in his book *The Process of Government* (1908), in which the instrumental, functional, interactional, and social behavioral tenets of Pragmatic social inquiry figure prominently. The extent to which Pragmatism had shaped the climate of thought can be seen in Bentley's theory of social analysis: the objectives are the description of socially observable human activity, not in the purely physical or psychological aspects, but in the social context, situation, or frame of reference (1908).

Bentley's writings deal with language from a number of different perspectives and reflect his broad concerns with knowledge and social inquiry. In his book *The Process of Government* he states, "Language must be regarded as a differentiated form of activity, and the only way we can handle it with any approach to scientific accuracy in studying social phenomena is by valuing it, not with reference to some theoretical idea or feeling content, but with reference to other activities directly" (181). "Just as speech itself is a differentiated bit of activity—we have it in no other form, remember, unless we consciously or unconsciously bolster it up with a theory made in advance and dragged in by violence—so this whole set of speaking-writing-indorsing people is a differentiated bit of activity. It is a group activity that has taken on, temporarily or with some permanence, a fairly definite form—definite enough, at any rate, for us to handle, describe, and value in terms of other activities" (182). "Just what [its] relations are with other activities, that is, just how the whole complex can best be stated to bring out the value of its parts, is something to be proved through investigation, not to be assumed in advance on the basis of any psychology whatever" (184). Throughout the book, Bentley's dynamic theory for the study of political activity is hardly different from de Laguna's (not to say Firth's) theory for the study of language behavior.

Of Bentley's work, the piece that is perhaps most directly addressed to linguists is his "Memoranda on a program of research into language", presented as a seminar at Columbia University in 1941 and published thirteen years later in his book *Inquiry into Inquiries*. His lecture is an arraignment of linguists, formal logicians and semanticists who think that language can best be studied in isolation from the context of its use and users. On reading the text of the lecture, Dewey wrote, "It seems to me it is the first time a full statement has been made that at once
shatters the formalistic idea that language can be analyzed in isolation from context [...] and also gives an empirically verifiable context" (letter to Bentley, 1 Nov. 1941, in Ratner & Altman (eds) 1964: 87).\(^{16}\)

In the mid-1930's, Bentley began the correspondence with Dewey that lasted until Dewey's death and led to their close collaboration on a series of articles and studies. When Dewey was 90 and Bentley 79, they collected the fruits of their joint efforts in *Knowing and the Known*, in which one of their avowed aims was to get others to see language, in all its speakings and writings, as man-himself-in-action-dealing-with-things.\(^{17}\)

Mead also had close relations with Dewey, especially during the ten years they were colleagues at the University of Chicago. Morris, once a disciple of Mead, writes, "They were close friends from the years at the University of Michigan [before their move to Chicago], and constantly discussed their problems together during the years at the University of Chicago" (1934: x-xi). Mead, with Dewey, is regarded as a pillar of Pragmatism; their work, in fact, is often seen as complementary. Mead published far less than his better-known colleague (though his influence on students was enormous) and focused his efforts on a much narrower range of interests, "but in those areas of primary interest to him, Mead was a profound thinker, digging deep for the solid philosophic ground of his ideas" (Rucker 1969: 20). Morris (whose understanding of Dewey's works, however, was something less than complete) writes, "If Dewey gives range and vision, Mead gave analytical depth and scientific precision. If Dewey is at once the rolling rim and many of the radiating spokes of the contemporary pragmatic wheel, Mead is the hub", which, when all is said and done, has travelled just as far (1934: xi). However this may be, Dewey's own respect for Mead's originality was total (Dewey 1931a: 310-311), and it must be held that both men developed their views on language individually, neither derivative upon nor in concert with the other.

The most isolated of the four was Grace de Laguna.\(^{18}\) Raised in Washington state (then a territory), she studied philosophy at Cornell University (PhD 1906). At Cornell, she also studied psychology under Edward Titchener, a student of Wundt, but reacted against him and his school, finding more of value in James, Dewey, and--later--Washburn and Köhler. Her husband Theodore, with whom she collaborated on *Dogmatism and Evolution* (1910), spanned philosophy and sociology; his *Factors of Social Evolution* (1926) reflects some of his wife's interests, while her *Speech* shares a
number of its sociological and evolutionary concerns. From her position at Bryn Mawr College, where they were both professors of philosophy, she knew none of the other pragmatists on a personal level. In fact, her work is only with difficulty regarded as belonging to the Pragmatist canon, despite the remarkable confluence of views. Her originality was without compare. There are, however, intellectual and scientific relationships which link her work with the others, and in a historical discussion these common epistemic features deserve some mention.

All four had extensive philosophic training and shared a common background in the Pragmatism of William James, John Dewey, and George Herbert Mead. Their sociological concerns, though not precisely Darwinian (certainly not in its naive senses), had much more in common with the Anglo-American tradition, and with the German Simmel, than with Durkheim and his collective consciousness and other superorganic hypostatizations. They also shared an interest in psychology at a time when the reigning psychological theories of the nineteenth century were succumbing to upheaval and overthrow. Here, William James' monumental Principles of Psychology is significant, as are Dewey's reflex arc paper, said to have been the foundation of the 'Functional School' of psychology, and Köhler's Gestalt psychology, whose insights later supplemented the purely behavioral approach.

The functional movement was a reaction against the dominant structural (or existential) theory of psychology and against the European tradition of dualistic, introspective, philosophical psychology. Structural psychology derived primarily from Wundt and his massive studies and was represented in the United States by Titchener, with its intellectual center at Cornell. (It is worth noting that both Mead and de Laguna had had personal contact with proponents of the Wundtian position, the former during his studies in Germany, the latter through her work with Titchener at Cornell.) The social behaviorists, closely allied and to a large extent deriving from the functional movement, rejected introspection-bound psychology and the many dilemmas created by mind-body dualisms. Placing their views on language in deliberate and sharp contrast with Wundt, they presented serious criticisms of his theories—especially his Sprachtheorie—as defective and fundamentally inadequate. (Bloomfield's 1914 Introduction to the Study of Language is of course Wundtian to the core.) Mead (1934: 31-32, 42-56) writes, "His psychological parallelism vitiates the analysis of social experiences—and especially of communication—which he bases upon the assumption of that parallelism" (42), and observes that Wundt's theory leaves him unable to deal with communication "as
significant communication'' (53). de Laguna, who devoted many of her early publications to the problem of dualism, concludes (1927: 10-15) that Wundt's ultimate failure to deal meaningfully with language, in spite of the sophistication and rigor of his analyses and the massive array of empirical data he marshalls to the task, demonstrates definitively the inherent futility of the traditional and extraordinarily widespread dualistic conception of language as a means of expression.

The psychological perspective developed in these works is instead one of 'social behaviorism', which proposes to found its inquiry on objective, observable phenomena, avoiding the pitfalls of, on the one hand, 'inner mental processes' and introspectionism, and on the other, mechanism and neurological reductionism. It "studies the activity or behavior of the individual as it lies within the social process; the behavior of an individual can be understood only in terms of the behavior of the whole social group of which he is a member, since his individual acts are involved in larger, social acts which go beyond himself and which implicate the other members of the group" (Mead 1934: 6-7). Its inquiry extends "beyond the central nervous system of the individual organism" and considers "the individual act as part of the larger social whole to which it in fact belongs, and from which, in a definite sense, it gets its meaning" (8). Significantly, the social behaviorism elaborated in these works (and in Firth's) and applied to the study of language is less dogmatic and more open to different sources of data (including self-observation) than any of the other psychological theories found in twentieth century linguistics. It does not ignore, for example, the inner experience of the individual nor torture its theory over so-called 'private knowledge'.

The social behaviorists took great pains to distinguish themselves from John B. Watson's shallow, mechanistic physiological behaviorism. An explicit discussion of Watson's behaviorism is doubly important here: for many Americans, especially after Chomsky (1959) and the changes it wrought in American linguistics, the behaviorism of Watson and Weiss IS behaviorism, and behaviorism is to be roundly damned. Many scholars--especially in linguistics--are not aware of the earlier, non-mechanistic theory of social behaviorism represented by these four writers. Criticism of Watson, who had studied at the University of Chicago but broke away from the theories developed there, in fact began with the social behaviorists, who felt that Watson's behaviorism was too narrow, too sterile, and too dogmatic in ruling things out of the realm of 'proper inquiry'. They observed that Watson's exclusion of introspection, personal knowledge, consciousness, mind, and
all other 'mental' phenomena leaves the inquiry with little meaningfu!

useful material to work with (cf. Mead 1934: 10-11) and as a result subjects Watsonian psychology to some of the same epi-

stemological defects as the introspectionism against which it is a reaction (cf. Dewey 1922). Watson's provisions for language they found particularly inadequate: "A behaviorist such as Watson holds that all of our thinking is vocalization. However, Watson does not take into account all that is involved here, namely, that these stimuli are the essential elements in elaborate social pro-

cesses and carry with them the value of these social processes. It is fair to assume that the vocal process, together with the intellignece and thought that go with it, is not simply a playing of vocal elements against each other. Such a view neglects the social context of language" (Mead 1934: 69). The contrast between Watsonian behaviorism and their broader theory is made explicit: "This approach is one of particular importance because it is able to deal with the field of communication in a way which neither Watson nor the introspectionist can do. We want to approach lan-
guage not from the standpoint of inner meanings to be expressed, but in its larger context of co-operation in the group taking place by means of signals and gestures. Meaning appears within that process. Our behaviorism is social behaviorism" (Mead 1934: 6). Skinner is of course the intellectual heir to Watsonism, and many of the criticisms levelled against Watson apply in spades to Skinner. Chomsky's famous--but misguided--devastation of Verbal Behavior completely ignores the social factors which could have provided him with a useful refutation of Skinnerian behaviorism. Instead, his polemic in many ways merely flails, with the rag of mentalism, at the dead horse of mechanism that the social behaviorists had disposed of decades before.

There is one more force in the intellectual context of the pragmatic theories of language, and it is a problematic one. The Polish-British anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski, founder of the British or Functional school of social anthropology, published as a supplement to Ogden & Richards' The Meaning of Meaning (1923) an extraordinary essay entitled "The problem of meaning in primitive languages". The theory of language it presents accords to an astonishing degree with the views of Dewey, de Laguna, et al. already discussed above: Language is a mode of action, rather than a countersign of thought (296). The meaning of words is rooted in their pragmatic efficiency (297). A statement, spoken in real life, is never detached from the situation in which it has been uttered (307). Speech is the necessary means of communion; it is the one indispensable instrument for creating the ties of the moment without which unified social action is impossible (310).
The study of any language, spoken by a people who live under conditions different from our own and possess a different culture, must be carried out in conjunction with the study of their culture and of their environment (306). And—as cited above—in the reality of a spoken living tongue, the utterance has no meaning except in the context of situation (307).

This essay was not Malinowski's first publication on language—a number of his central tenets are adumbrated in Chapter 18, "The Power of Words in Magic", of Argonauts of the Western Pacific (1922): "Magic is not built up in the narrative style; it does not serve to communicate ideas from one person to another; it does not purport to contain a consecutive, consistent meaning. It is an instrument serving special purposes, intended for the exercise of man's power over things, and its meaning, giving this word a wider sense, can be understood only in correlation to this aim" (432). But it was, until Coral Gardens and their Magic (1935), his most complete exposition of linguistic issues, and it remains even today his most influential.21

The essay's significance was recognized immediately. In his review of The Meaning of Meaning, Dewey found Malinowski's work superior to Ogden and Richards' own discussion and commented, "I should indeed advise all readers to begin the book with a reading of this supplementary essay" (1924: 78). Dewey's Experience and Nature and de Laguna's Speech were both well underway when the essay was published. Both authors recognized it as the work of a kindred spirit and gave it appropriate acknowledgment in their books. Dewey, in fact, added a postscript to Chapter V (205-207) in which he gives lengthy quotations from Malinowski and stresses once more the seminal significance of Malinowski's insistence on language as a mode of action in the context of situation. With high praise for the clarity and importance of Malinowski's thought, he declares, "Nothing more important for philosophers to hearken to has been written than Dr. Malinowski's conclusion" (1925: 206). In his "Context and thought", Dewey again returns to Malinowski, introducing his entire discussion on context in language and thought through Malinowski's observations.

The problem for the historian, then, is this: to assess the factors and influences which formed a common background in the formation of the thought of these five scholars and which enabled them—simultaneously, largely independently, and for different goals and purposes—to shape the contextual, functional approach to the fundamental problems of language. The features we have explored here—pragmatist philosophy, social behaviorism, personal
acquaintances, reactions to Wundt, dualism, and Watsonian mechanism--are adequate to the problem until we come to Malinowski and the independent, coincident discovery his essay represents. This development requires that we examine in greater depth the conditions of possibility and the scientific, epistemic context within which these five great thinkers formulated congruent theories of profound significance for the study of language and man. Further discussion of this problem is unfortunately beyond the scope of this paper; however, a solution, from the perspective of the history of British linguistics, is undertaken in Mason 1981.

The Pragmatic approach to the study of language found in the works of Dewey, Mead, Bentley, and de Laguna, had almost no effect on the development of American linguistics. For American linguistics it has been a grave misfortune; for the history of linguistics it raises some interesting questions. How is it that such multiple and simultaneous espousals of a fundamental linguistic doctrine bore so little fruit? For as Robert Merton (1963: 380) observes, multiple discoveries "heighten the likelihood that the discovery will be promptly incorporated in current scientific knowledge and will so facilitate the further advancement of knowledge."22

One of the reasons for their lack of influence must surely be that they were outsiders to the linguistic mainstream. All four were philosophers and social psychologists, not 'professional linguists', and they did not publish in the journals of the linguistic Establishment. While philosophers, especially philosophers of language, have had a considerable influence on linguistics in recent years--as we can see from the growth of speech act theory--the political as well as intellectual struggles to found an 'autonomous science' that dominated the early years of the Linguistic Society precluded any such interpenetration and cross-fertilization with the pragmatist tradition.

The second reason for their lack of influence is even more important: it is that the conception and theory of language they proposed was totally unlike anything known to linguistics at the time. As de Laguna (1927: 21) wrote, "It is one thing to recognize the truth of a general principle, and a very different thing to apply the principle persistently and systematically, above all when this must be done in opposition to a firmly established tradition." American linguistics has generally resisted even recognizing the truth of the general principle. In a letter to Dewey about his ongoing research in linguistic theory, Bentley wrote, "The problem I have been mulling over for months is how the blind
can be shocked into recognizing what one is trying to say to them" (22 June 1942, in Ratner & Altman (eds) 1964: 109). The concept of language as an essential and socially functioning activity of human interaction, rather than "a method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires" (Sapir), or "the totality of utterances that can be made in a speech community" (Bloomfield), or "a set of sentences" (Chomsky), was never--and to an extent is not even now--understood or accepted in American linguistics.

The practice of ignoring contemporary but conflicting currents of thought, especially when the developments are taking place in another discipline, is--though too common in our experience--by no means new or limited to linguistics. The still greater tragedy, however, is that even when attitudes change, we don't take the time to go back and study those with whose earlier work and interests our own now have much in common. These four scholars did not engage in detailed grammatical analyses. Led by their broader concerns, their work instead provides the modern linguist with a powerful general theoretical framework for the study of language in its social context--a framework and vision which contemporary sociolinguistics still lacks, despite its massive accumulations of instantial data.

NOTES

I would like to thank Sophia Morgan and David Rood for their comments and suggestions.

1For two examples among many, see Schlieben-Lange 1973 and Aracil 1978; also Currie & Currie 1978 and the discussion in Language in Society over the origins of the term 'sociolinguistics' (Ornstein 1977, Hymes 1979). As a description of the vogue of sociolinguistics, this view is correct; however, we must not mistake fashion for invention.

2Cf. Kachru, 1980, Mitchell 1978, and, for a detailed study of Firth's theories and their place in twentieth century linguistics, Mason 1981. Firth's concern with the social context of language and the sociological component of linguistics is unmistakable in his very first book (1930) and for the next thirty years thereafter. "The technique of semantics" contains a clear manifesto for 'sociological linguistics'--"the great field for future research" (1935: 27; excerpted and retitled "On sociological linguistics" in Hymes 1964).
3For a superb critical history of Pragmatism and an introduction to the thought of Dewey and Mead, see Thayer's monumental *Meaning and Action* (1968). de Laguna's contributions to linguistics are discussed in Mason 1980. Bentley is virtually unknown except to certain circles in political science and no full analysis of his thought as it pertains to language has ever been undertaken. In fact, with regard to contributions on language, none of the four has received the critical and historiographic attention that is his due.

4The concept here is well stated, though the sentence is best understood away from its original context: in the surrounding paragraph--and article--Hall badly misunderstands Dewey's intent (cf. Dewey 1928: 477).

5Note that this outline is very similar to Firth's schema for the study of meaning in the context of situation: compare Firth 1950: 182, 1957b: 175-179.

6Dewey is not suggesting, of course, that there can be such a thing as a meaning without a context; if this is not clearly understood, his discussion of mathematical symbols as seemingly liberated from all ulterior human use and consequence could easily be misinterpreted.

7Black 1962 criticizes Dewey's instrumentalism and his "philosophy of language" without, I am afraid, having understood much of Dewey's thought.

8"Speech made an end of the individual. No normal man can escape phonetic bondage. A speaking man is a corporate man, associated through the present with man of all time" (Firth 1930: 173). The concept of socialization through language, significant also for Dewey, was exceptionally important for Mead and his studies of the development of the self--the "I" and the "me"--in the social environment (see esp. *Mind, Self and Society*, 1934, Chapter III). (Compare here also the recent social theory of Jürgen Habermas: *Kultur und Kritik*, 1973, among others; also Brüggemann 1977.) Firth, who treated it briefly on a number of occasions (e.g. 1950), called in addition for a 'biographical linguistics' which would study the contexts and uses of language throughout the 'seven ages' of man (1935: 29).

9This concept is universal among the four (and central also in Firth). For a presentation of it within the broader context of a theory of the social sciences, see Bentley 1935.
It is difficult to isolate and describe individual speech behaviour, if there could be such a thing. [A man's] bodily speech habits are established links with his fellows, and he finds it impossible to draw a boundary around his individuality" (Firth 1930: 173). Bentley's "The human skin" (1941a) treats in detail the theoretical and functional implications of this non-barrier for philosophy and the social sciences.

For further discussion by Dewey of situation and context, especially as they pertain to the process of inquiry and thought, see his Logic (1938), sections IV and VI or as excerpted by Bernstein in Dewey 1960, "The Pattern of Inquiry". See also his rejoinder to A. E. Murphy in "Experience, knowledge, and value" (1939), esp. pp 560-568.

Personal communication from Frederica de Laguna, 28 January 1980; also, letter from Grace de Laguna to Hugo Bieswanger, 26 September 1967, now in the Manuscripts and Archives collection of the Bryn Mawr College Library.

For a detailed biography of Dewey, see Dykhuizen 1973; for a good discussion of his middle years and the Chicago milieu, see Rucker 1969.

How much Bentley was influenced by Dewey in this early period is not entirely clear, though I suspect that Ratner (1964: 27-28) somewhat overemphasizes Dewey's role in shaping Bentley's scholarly outlook because of the nature of the work he is introducing. One thing is certain, however, and that is that Bentley's thought underwent a substantial transformation in the years between his doctoral dissertation (1895) and his now-classic The Process of Government.

In addition to his published works, Bentley undertook several studies specifically on language which, unfortunately, he never completed. "About a year and a half ago I drafted an essay, approaching book size, under the provisional title: 'The Concept: a study of talking and thinking as forms of doing'. [...] I should be able in a few months now to take up the old ms. again, and develop my form of 'a general theory of language' as an outstanding behavior among behaviors, all of them interactional, or as my last essays term it, 'situational'" (letter to Dewey, 24 January 1939, in Ratner & Altman (eds) 1964: 61-62). Three years later he wrote, "I am planning to complete three unfinished papers: one on Subjects and Objects (with an eye to such an audience as Philosophical Review); one on the
difficulties of a theory of language (with a *Scientific Monthly* audience in mind); and one on the main propositions of a general theory of language (with an eye to *Language* magazine") (letter to Dewey, 24 April 1942, in Ratner & Altman (eds) 1964: 100).

Dewey's enthusiasm here is somewhat excessive. Further, from their sympathetic quotation of it five years later, it is doubtful that he knew Firth's *The Tongues of Men* (1937) at this time.

In this collection of eleven papers, one is by Dewey alone, three are by Bentley, and the rest are written jointly; they were originally published between 1945 and 1948 and revised for the collected volume. The remarkable philosophic correspondence between Dewey and Bentley has been collected and published in Ratner & Altman (eds) 1964. Most of Dewey's other letters and manuscript Nachlass are now owned by the Library of Southern Illinois University at Carbondale; Bentley's correspondence and papers, including some of those mentioned above (note 15), are in the manuscript collection of the Indiana University Library, Bloomington.

I am very grateful to Frederica de Laguna, Grace de Laguna's daughter and a noted American anthropologist in her own right, for all her kind and generous assistance, without which my knowledge of her mother's life and intellectual background would be seriously deficient and my understanding of her work correspondingly lacking. G. de Laguna's contributions--hitherto unnoticed--to the development of Firthian linguistics and a reassessment of her place in the history of modern linguistics are found in Mason 1981 and 1980.

For an excellent discussion of Dewey's contributions to psychology, see Allport 1939. For an overview of the functional school, and its relations to social and Watsonian behaviorism, see Rucker 1969, Chapter 3.

Our point of approach [...] is behavioristic, but unlike Watsonian behaviorism it recognizes the parts of the act which do not come to external observation, and it emphasizes the act of the human individual in its natural social situation" (Mead 1934: 8). de Laguna's explicit behaviorism, which she "frankly" adopts as her method, makes no mention of Watsonism and is clearly of the broader variety (1927: 123-139). For criticism of Watson from a sociological point of view, see also Bentley 1928. It is important--especially in a post-Chomskyan context--to note Bertrand Russell's contemporaneous view of "language as a bodily habit" and examine his very similar criticisms of Watson's behaviorism, particularly of Watson's theory of language learning (1927: 36-40,
Because of its inclusion in Ogden & Richards' tremendously successful *The Meaning of Meaning*, "The problem of meaning in primitive languages" has achieved an almost unparalleled circulation among linguists, literaturists, and others concerned with language. Were it not for its revolutionary, almost iconoclastic character and the gulf which separates it from the standard views of language so overwhelmingly dominant in linguistics, literature, semiotics, and even anthropology, one might wonder why it has not had a far greater role in shaping the course of language study in the twentieth century.

Merton, of course, finds nothing unusual about the phenomenon of multiple discovery itself, since investigation shows singletons to be vastly the exception (1961), though this by no means obviates the need to examine common underlying contexts and conditions of possibility when multiples are found. What is particularly curious in the present case is not only the difficulty in determining what those common underlying factors were, but even more the fact that the discoveries were not incorporated or given further elaboration in the way one would have expected (for this see Mason 1981).

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* indicates the edition used in this study.