Chapter 1

Dualism and Monism in the Study of Slurs and Beyond

Eleonora Orlando and Andrés Saab

1. Introduction

This book is mainly focused on the analysis of the expressive aspects of slur-words, namely, those words *prima facie* related to the conveyance of contemptuous or derogatory feelings for the members of a certain group of people identified in terms of their ethnicity ("spic"), sexual orientation ("faggot"), religion ("kike"), political ideology ("fascist"), and other personal qualities.[1] In as far as they are systematically used to express emotional attitudes of some sort, slurs can be considered a kind of expressive words. As is clear, not all words are expressive in this sense, namely, in the sense of having, in some way to be further characterized, an emotional load: many of them are expressively neutral. Consider, for instance, the loaded "bureaucrat" in contrast with the neutral "public employee", and the loaded "rat" as opposed to the neutral "informer". Now, in as far as traditional semantics considered natural language to be mainly a vehicle for knowledge, it focused on the representational properties of language that are responsible for its informative role, to the point of putting forward a replacement of natural language with a logical or a properly regimented one. For Frege, a paradigmatic representative of the traditional approach, expressive aspects were not part of the *thought* (that is, the proposition) semantically expressed by a sentence; they determined a separate, non-semantic dimension, its *color.* Consider, for instance, the following, well-known paragraph:

[…] it is useful to the poet to have at his disposal a number of different words that can be substituted for one another without altering the thought, but which can act in different ways on the feelings and imagination of the hearer. We may think, e.g., of the words "walk", "stroll", "saunter". These means are also used to the same end in everyday language. If we compare the sentences "This dog howled the whole night" and "This cur howled the whole night", we find that the thought is the same. The first sentence tells us neither more nor less than does the second. But whilst the word "dog" is neutral as between having pleasant or unpleasant associations, the word "cur" certainly has unpleasant rather than pleasant associations and puts us rather in mind of a dog with a somehow unkempt appearance. Even if it is grossly unfair to the dog to think of it in this way, we cannot say that this makes the second sentence false. True, anyone who utters this sentence speaks pejoratively, but this is not part of the thought expressed. What distinguishes the second sentence from the first is of the nature of an interjection. […] (Frege 1897: 140)

Expressive components of words, namely, those having an effect on "the feelings and the imagination" are not related to the representation of features of the world, and hence they play no role in determining the truth-conditions and truth-value of the sentences in which they occur. In a nutshell, expressive components are not representational. Consequently, in as far as traditional semantics was only concerned with representational properties like reference and truth, the expressive components of natural language words were not considered to be part of their meanings, and hence were thrown out of the semantic reflection.

The first attempts to theoretically acknowledge the fact that some words are associated with emotions took place in the realm of meta-ethics, mostly within the framework of the different non-cognitivist approaches (Ogden and Richards 1923, Barnes 1933). For instance, for traditional emotivists (Barnes 1933, Stevenson 1944), thin moral terms such as "right"/"good" and "wrong"/'bad" semantically expressed, respectively, attitudes of approval or preference and

disapproval or rejection. *Moral Expressivism* (Blackburn 1993, Gibbard 1990) has been their natural heir: according to it, sentences containing moral terms are vehicles of different sorts of non-cognitive attitudes and mental states, different from the paradigmatically cognitive beliefs, and, hence, they are not apt for being true or false.[2]

Nowadays, when the study of all aspects of natural language use has moved to central stage, the study of expressivity has crossed the borders of the reflection on moral language.[3] Kaplan (1999) is one of the philosophers who paved the way for the formal study of those aspects of words that are not related to the properties being represented and contributed to the truth-conditions of the sentences in which they occur. His idea is that expressivity in general is related to a restriction on the contexts of use: a sentence containing an expressive word will be expressively correct if it is uttered in those contexts in which the agent is properly related to an emotional attitude associated with the word at stake. This idea can be clearly identified in the following paragraph:

> Now here is the new idea: we can get an equally useful measure of the expressive information that is in a sentence — or, in the case of exclamatories like "ouch" and "oops", in an expressive standing alone — *by looking at all the contexts at which it, the sentence containing the expressive or the expressive standing alone, is expressively correct.* […] I claim that "ouch" is an expressive that is used to express the fact that the agent is in pain. What is the semantic information in the word "ouch" on this analysis? The semantic information in the word "ouch" is —more accurately, is represented by— the set of those contexts at which the word "ouch" is expressively correct (since it contains no descriptive information), namely, *the set of those contexts at which the agent is in pain.* That set of contexts represents the semantic information contained in the word "ouch". (Kaplan 1999: 15-16, our emphasis)

Among the kind of words to be considered, there are, for instance, pure interjections or Kaplan's "exclamatories" (such as "ouch" and "oops"), words with an intuitive emotive load (like the

previous "bureaucrat", "rat" and "cur"), the so-called "baby talk" (encompassing expressions like "bunny", "kitty", etc.), honorifics (such as the Spanish '*usted*' and the Italian '*Lei*'), and pejoratives, including, among other terms, adjectives like "stupid" and what will be our main focus of interest, namely, group slurs like "spic" in our initial list.[4]

As far as exclamatories are concerned, what can be characterized as a purely expressivist account can do the job, since they seem to lack any representational dimension. However, the other members of the list, crucially including the slurs, have an expressive as much as a representational dimension, and hence seem to call for a hybrid or dualistic semantics. In this connection, it is worth pointing out that even some of the early emotivists, like Stevenson, suggested that words for general moral evaluation, like the above-mentioned thin moral terms, have not only what they called an "emotive" or "non-cognitive" meaning but also a cognitive o, in our terms, a representational one —an idea that has been developed by Contemporary hybrid expressivists, like Barker (2000). Therefore, directly inspired by Kaplan (1999), some theories have encompassed the existence of two meaning dimensions for different kinds of expressives: a representational or truth-conditional dimension, determinant of *at-issue* content of sentences, and an independent expressive or non-truth-conditional one, constitutive of their expressive content (Potts 2003, 2005 and 2007, McCready 2010, Predelli 2013, and Gutzmman 2015, among many others). Consequently, those sentences containing that kind of expressions turn out to be not only representationally true or false but also expressively correct or incorrect, which depends not on the world-conditions they represent but on the contexts in which they are used.

Considerations along the previous lines gave thus rise to different versions of *Dualism* about some pejoratives, in particular, those that are our main topic of concern, namely, slurs. Note that slurs, like most expressively charged expressions, have a neutral counterpart, namely, they form pairs with neutral ones ("spic" / "Latin-American", "cur" / "dog",, "bunny" / "rabbit", the Spanish personal pronouns '*tú*' "you$_{informal}$" / '*usted*' 'you$_{formal}$", etc.). Based on this idea, those approaches have endorsed the *Identity Thesis,* according to which the representational dimension of a slur-word

is equivalent to the representational dimension of its neutral counterpart. In terms of the previous example, the representational meaning of "spic", the property of having a Latin-American origin (or the set of people with a Latin-American origin), is identical to the representational meaning of its neutral counterpart, "Latin-American"; then, all instances of

(1) Diego is a spic.

and

(2) Diego is Latin-American.

have the same truth-condition or *at-issue* content, namely,

(3) "Diego is a spic" is true = "Diego is Latin-American" is true iff Diego has a Latin-American origin.

But, unlike "Latin-American", "spic" has also an expressive meaning —it is not an expressively neutral word. Accordingly, the sentences uttered in using (1) and (2) will not be *expressively* equivalent.

Moreover, the *Identity Thesis* presupposes that the two dimensions are independent from each other. This independence has been mostly grounded on a feature that is characteristic of slurs, their *Non-Displaceability* or *Hyper-Projectability.* According to it, the expressive dimension of slurs projects out of the scope, or "scopes out", of the usual sentential operators affecting truth-conditions, such as negation, conditionals, non-factive attitude verbs, modals, etc. In terms of an example, setting aside the possibility of a metalinguistic interpretation,

(4) Diego is not a spic.

appears to be as derogatory as its affirmative counterpart.[5] Likewise,

(5) If those spics move into our neighborhood, I will try to sell my house.

seems to express an unconditional derogatory attitude towards Latin-Americans: the
conditionalization introduced by the antecedent does not affect the expressive charge of the slur.
Moreover, in uttering

(6) Peter thinks that Diego is a spic.

the speaker conveys a derogatory attitude towards Latin-Americans, independently of the content of
Peter's belief and whatever emotional attitude he may hold towards them. The last example also
serves to make it manifest the *Agent-Centered* feature of slurs, namely, the fact that, barring some
exceptional scenarios, they have a strong tendency not to be separable from the speaker's attitude.[6]
So, it is concluded that there must be an aspect of the meaning of a slur, related to the negative
emotional components in question, which is non-truth-conditional, in as far as it is independent of
its contribution to the truth-conditional content of the sentences in which it occurs. These results are
thus compatible with different conceptions of that independent dimension and its specific relation to
the truth-conditional one.

Therefore, *Dualism* encompasses different proposals concerning the nature of the expressive
meaning at stake: it has been alternatively conceived of as a conventionally implicated propositional
content (Potts 2003, 2005, 2007, Williamson 2009, McCready 2010, Whiting 2013), a bias
understood as a set of contexts of use (Predelli 2013), an encoded contemptuous attitude
constitutive of a rule of use (Jeshion 2013a, 2013b), a use-conditional proposition (Gutzmann

2015), a list of register features (Diaz Legaspe, Liu and Stainton 2020), an associated stereotype (Tirrell 1999, Camp 2013, Orlando and Saab 2020a,b), among other possible options. It is worth taking into account that the expressive meaning need not be identified, as in the pioneer ethical theories, with an encoded non-cognitive attitude; more specifically, the relation between a slur-word and the emotion of contempt or derogation can be more indirect —for instance, on a stereotype account, the slur is semantically associated with a stereotype of the target group constituted by a set of concepts with a general negative valence, which involves that its use will be paradigmatically, but not always, accompanied by an emotion of contempt on the speaker's part. Accordingly, being expressive or having an expressive charge does not amount to being just the vehicle of an emotion —but to encoding some conventional aspects, which might include descriptive components, that are systematically, though not unconditionally, related to the expression of an emotion.[7] Moreover, it must be taken into account that the emotion of contempt can be considered to be a complex mental state, encompassing not only an affective component (or a feeling) but also a cognitive as well as an evaluative one.

To present a paradigmatic example of what we classify as a dualistic theory, McCready (2010), modifying Potts' (2005) logic for conventional implicatures, has put forward a semantic system in which it is possible to derive two different, parallel (hence, not interacting) propositions in association with any use of (1), repeated below,

(1) Diego is a spic.

p: Diego is Latin-American ● *q*: The speaker despises Latin-Americans / Latin-Americans are bad

(the symbol "●" being the meta-logical operator introduced by Potts 2005 to separate the two dimensions of meaning)

Here, whereas p constitutes the truth-conditional or *at-issue* content of the statement, q is its expressive one, determined just by the expressive contribution made by "spic".

This kind of approach can be then be considered to be a form of *Propositional Dualism.* There are also non-propositional versions of dualism: Potts (2007) provides us with a clear instance of this alternative strategy, according to which the expressive meaning is not modeled as a proposition but as a simple expressive index. Our previous example would then be rendered as follows:

p: Diego is Latin-American ● i_e

The point of introducing expressive indexes is offering an instrument to denote purely affective states on the speaker's part. This second kind of dualism can be thus characterized as *Expressivist Dualism.* Jeshion (2013a,b) provides a different variant of the same kind of approach.[8]

On the other hand, other authors have resisted any form of *Dualism* about slurs by embracing a position that can be characterized as *Lexical Monism,* that is, a monistic approach according to which those terms have an expressively charged representational meaning, more specifically, they take them to represent properties that are not purely factual or descriptive but *constitutively normative* in the sense that they embody a derogatory conception of the corresponding target group (Hom 2008, 2010, 2012 Hom and May 2013, 2018). From this perspective, "spic" and "Latin-American", far from being truth-conditionally equivalent, have two different lexical entries:

Lexical Monism

a. ⟦Diego is *Latin-American*⟧ = L_1(Diego), where ⟦L_1⟧ = $\lambda x.$ x is Latin-American

b. ⟦Diego is a *spic*⟧ = S_2(Diego), where ⟦S_2⟧ = $\lambda x.$ x is despicable for being Latin-American

The lexical entry in (b) corresponds to an empty term, since of course nobody is despicable on accounts of his/her origin. A different version of *Lexical Monism,* on which slurs are correlated with prototypical concepts representing sets of properties with different degrees of saliency, has been defended by Croom (for instance, Croom 2011, 2013, 2014, 2015).

The so-called "presuppositional accounts" can be considered to be another variant of monism: on this view, there is only one meaning, the representational one, which is not expressively charged, while expressivity is accounted for at the presuppositional level, namely, as an aspect of slur-words contributing to the presuppositional content of the sentences in which they occur (Macià 2002, Sauerland 2007, Schlenker 2007, Cepollaro 2015, Marques and García-Carpintero 2020). Our example would turn out to be analyzed along the following lines:

Presuppositional Monism

p : Diego is Latin-American   (proposition expressed)

q: Latin-Americans are despicable /

the speaker believes that Latin-Americans are despicable   (proposition presupposed)

Finally, there are other monistic approaches on which the expressive components of slur-words are considered to be not part of what is conventionally transmitted by the sentences containing them but part of *what those sentences pragmatically communicate*. More specifically, on some views, expressive components are thought to give rise to conversational implicatures (Nunberg 2018). Since what is at stake is a conversational implicature, each time a slur is used there is an additional proposition that is conversationally implicated by means of a Gricean mechanism (involving, from Nunberg 2018's perspective, a violation of the *Maxim of Manner*). This kind of view can be regarded as a monistic alternative, which, as opposed to *Lexical Monism,* conceives of slurs as purely factual or descriptive words at the representational level.

Pragmatic Monism

p: Diego is Latin-American   (proposition semantically expressed)

q: The speaker despises Latin-Americans   (proposition pragmatically communicated)

Moreover, other pragmatic approaches do not appeal to Gricean implicatures: for instance, the use of slurs has been conceived of in terms of impolite behavior, namely, a kind of behavior that signals an endorsement of certain associations with the power of causing warranted offense (Bolinger 2017; see also Hess 2018).[9]

The main different approaches to the semantics of slurs that have been sketched are schematically represented in the following table:

Approaches	Dualism	Monism
Propositional	Yes	No
Expressivist	Yes	No
Lexical	No	Yes
Presuppositional	No	Yes
Pragmatic	No	Yes

Table 1.1: *Dualism and Monism in the Study of Expressivity*

(The position described in footnote 9 would be an *Expressivist Monism* but we have not included it in the chart due to its implausibility.)

Independently of the approach one favors, it is undeniable that the use of words with expressive aspects has important social, political and moral effects. So, expressivity links the semantics and pragmatics of words to sociological, political and ethical considerations. Therefore,

there is the issue of exploring the theoretically interesting relations, if there are any, holding between, on the one hand, the above-mentioned approaches and, on the other, the adoption of a particular political ideology or a certain moral perspective.

2. A Brief Summary of the Book

In this subsection, we will briefly describe the different contributions to this book, and how they connect to the issues introduced in the previous section. The following two chapters develop new insights for dualistic approaches to expressivity, in general, and to slurs, in particular. In his "On the Locus of Expressivity. Deriving Parallel Meaning Dimensions from Architectural Considerations", Andrés Saab proposes a new foundation of dualism based on architectural considerations related to the interfaces between syntax, phonology and semantics. On his view, there are certain non-truth conditional meanings that are exclusively triggered by properties of vocabulary items (in the sense of Halle and Marantz 1993 and subsequent work). In other words, those meanings arise "late" and are not part of the syntactic-semantic derivation. Thus, the notion of a parallel meaning dimension is derived from architectural considerations without the need of any meta-logical operator (e.g., the "●" symbol in Potts 2005 or McCready 2010, among others). This proposal finds some interesting support from certain interactions involving biased words and ellipsis. The basic expressive paradigm involves pairs of words whose contribution to truth-conditional content is equivalent: they can only be differentiated by register (e.g., '*comer*' "to eat" vs. '*morfar*' "to eat$_{informal}$") or by register plus a derogatory dimension (e.g., 'boliviano' "Bolivian" vs. '*bolita*' "Bolivian$_{pejorative}$").

In the third chapter, "The Discursive Dimension of Slurs", Nicolás Lo Guercio develops a dualistic account focused on considerations concerning the kind of illocutionary act involved in using slurs. On this approach, slur-words express a standard *at-issue* content along with a conventional implicature; but, in contrast with other extant conventional implicature accounts (McCready 2010), Lo Guercio argues that the *non-at-issue* content of a slur is a property instead of

a proposition. Moreover, when complemented with a dynamic pragmatic framework like that of Portner (2004), the view implies that a sentence containing a slur carries two different discursive functions, that is, it updates two different components of context. On the one hand, the *at-issue* content updates the common ground. On the other hand, the *non-at-issue* content updates the To-Do List. It is then showed how the view can provide a general explanation of the way in which uses of slurs are capable of modifying permissibility facts and hence of bringing harm to their targets. Finally, the chapter shows how the proposed account can deal with different conversational moves that slurs make available, such as propaganda, attack and complicity.

Then, we have included a series of papers concerned with the above-described hyper-projectability of slurs —to the point that sometimes they cannot even be mentioned, namely, they turn out to be taboo expressions. Working within a bidimensional semantic framework derivative of Gutzmann (2015), in "A Bidimensional Account of Slurs", Ramiro Caso focuses on the systematic ambiguity of some slurs ascriptions. He argues that the semantic type of a slur's non-truth-conditional dimension is a particular kind of *de se* use-conditional proposition, which attributes the derogatory attitude to a contextually salient agent. A pragmatic interpretation principle warrants that the default attribution is speaker-oriented. However, conditions are clearly stated under which non-speaker-oriented attributions are licensed.

In their chapter, "Expressives and the Theory of Bias", Ludovic Soutif and Carlos Márquez review the *Theory of Bias* proposed in Predelli (2013). They show that the two-tiered account of the meaning of expressives (notably, sentential interjections and pejorative epithets) favored by that framework has the resources to provide a consistent explanation of their semantic behavior in *prima facie* awkward statements such as "Alas, I am unfavorably disposed towards something" or "That stupid Trump isn't stupid". On the critical side, they argue that the theory has a hard time at explaining the unshiftability of their bias, as opposed to the shiftability of the bias of discourse particles —a further member, according to some authors, of the category of expressives *lato sensu*—, and that it fails to pinpoint unpluggability as the crucial test for expressive content.

Within the framework of the dualistic theory advanced in his *Meaning without Truth* (2013)*,* in "Taboo. The Case of Slurs", Stefano Predelli focuses on an additional conventional element for some slurs, their taboo status. After an informal description of the peculiar conversational role of taboo-words, he pauses on their radical non-displaceability, namely, on the ability of some of their effects to resist the otherwise semantically neutralizing outcomes of pure quotation. He continues by comparing slurs that are on a par from the truth-conditional and derogatory viewpoint, but that are distinguishable from the viewpoint of taboo. And he concludes with some comments about the relationships between taboo and conventional meaning, and with some tentative remarks about the significance of taboo from the viewpoint of semantic theorizing.

The last group of chapters is focused on the offensive or derogatory nature of the expressive component of slurs, its independence with respect to individual attitudes, the moral import of using slurs and their relation to cultural stereotypes and group typifications. In "Slurs, the Amoralist and the Expression of Hate", Justina Diaz Legaspe points out that slurs are not, as one may feel inclined to think, type-expressive words, like "asshole" or "jerk": if anything, they are token-expressive words, more like "fuck" or "shit": they may acquire on occasions an expressive dimension, but for the most part, they are referential terms only appropriate within a given practice. These aspects of slurs and slur usage come to sight when illuminated by the comparison with the figure of the amoralist. The plausibility of the amoralist, a fully competent speaker who uses moral terms without committing herself to the associated actions, is highly contended in debates on hybrid approaches to moral terms. Similarly, the sole idea of a non-expressive slur user seems implausible, on the basis of the gut reaction we get when exposed to slur usage, which we ascribe to the rejection of the emotions and attitudes typically associated with their use. However, there is nothing wrong with the figure of non-expressive slur uses, except for the awkwardness of the words used out of context. In contrast, it is the figure of the non-discriminatory slur user that is implausible, for, due to the role of slurs in discriminatory practices, all uses of slurs constitute discriminatory acts.

In the essay "On the Moral Import of Using Slurs", Eleonora Orlando explores the question of whether there is any theoretically interesting relation between the semantic explanation of slurs and the adoption of a moral stance regarding moral issues such as racism, homophobia, and sexism. In particular, she considers the thesis, put forward by Hom and May (2013, 2018), according to which a morally innocent stance on such issues requires subscribing to a particular version of a truth-conditional account of the meaning of slur-words, what we have previously called *Lexical Monism,* which implies that slurs have a null extension. She argues that (i) subscribing to Hom and May's account neither warrants moral innocence nor precludes moral corruption, and (ii) subscribing to a different, dualistic account is equally compatible with holding a morally innocent stance. From her perspective, moral innocence regarding such crucial moral issues comes in degrees, and depends on taking a decision regarding our linguistic heritage, namely, the decision to not endorse certain prejudicial stereotypes.

Finally, in his contribution "*Sudaca*. Slurs and Typifying", Alfonso Losada puts forward an original monistic semantic analysis according to which slurs express complex concepts that are the product of a morally condemnable practice of classifying human beings on grounds of negative stereotypical features. These concepts are structured by, on the one hand, a neutral component, representing the property in terms of which the target group is primarily identified, and, on the other hand, a descriptive component, encompassing those traits thought to belong to its members by those who are convinced that the slur offers a proper representation of them, *i.e.*, the bigots. Thus, Losada's analysis denies the *Identity Thesis*: he defends the stance according to which slurs are empty terms. However, unlike Hom and May (2013), who ground *Null Extensionality* on moral facts, Losada's approach focuses on the representational error of deploying certain conceptual types of human beings.

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[1] Even if the slur-words that appear in this chapter are never used but always mentioned, we apologize in advance, in case someone finds their very mention offensive. We are conscious that some of them have become taboo.

[2] Although restricted to moral discourse, some authors have proposed detailed semantic accounts, in order to show how moral sentences can interact with sentences that are correlated with cognitive states like beliefs and are hence truth-apt. See, for instance, Gibbard (1990) and Schroeder (2008).

[3] Although see Anderson and Lepore (2013a,b) for a recent restatement and defense of Frege's notion of color.

[4] As is clear, expressivity is related to register, namely, the phenomenon of language variation determined by the type of social context involved. For the idea that the register of a word is constitutive of its expressive meaning, see Predelli (2013). See also Diaz Legaspe (this volume) for

a different application of the concept of register in accounting for slurs —the thesis that registered words, including slurs, are token-expressives in cross-contextual uses.

[5] The same result is achieved by the *Denial* test: according to it, in the following dialogue:

A: Diego is not a spic.

B: That is not true / That is false.

B is questioning not the expressive dimension but just the truth-conditional one, namely, the fact that Diego is Latin-American.

[6] However, although they are not common, there are some non-speaker-oriented uses, which led some authors to take slurs to be *Perspective Dependent* expressions (Bolinger 2017, Hess 2018). For examples of non-speaker-oriented uses of expressives in general, such as "My father screamed that he would never allow me to marry that bastard Webster", see Amaral et al. (2007) and Harris and Potts (2009).

[7] As a consequence, Diaz Legaspe (this volume) is driven to make a distinction between type and token expressives.

[8] Importantly, the theory in Potts (2007) is particularly designed for dealing with other types of expressives (epithets like "bastard" and expressive attributive adjectives like "fucking"). Indeed, the same is true for Potts' (2005) logic, which explicitly excludes hybrid terms like slurs from the set of expressives. In his own words, "all predicates that appear in copular position must necessarily fail to be expressive, because they provide no argument for the copular verb (nor a functor that could apply to it)" (Potts 2007, 194). Slurs, unlike attributive expressives, naturally occur in predicative position (*"The keys are damm." vs. "Juan is a spic."). McCready (2010), as already observed in the main text, extended Potts' (2005) logic to derive slurs as expressives (see also Gutzmann 2015). So, in principle, we see no principled reason to reject the theoretical possibility of an *Expressivist Dualism*. The same idea about the plausibility of extending Potts's (2007) approach to slurs can be found in Popa-Wyatt (2016) and Popa-Wyatt and Wyatt (2018). In both works, it is suggested that

such an extension could be a good way to remedy the expressivist semantic approach in Jeshion (2013b) which, in principle, cannot account for the slur variability in the degree of offensiveness.

[9] Some philosophers (Hedger 2012, 2013) have taken slurs to have a *purely expressive* meaning, understood in terms of the presence of an associated emotional attitude. This position would thus amount to a version of what can be called *Expressivist Monism.* Although the position can be maintained concerning the above-mentioned exclamatories, it seems to be counterintuitive if applied to slurs: by definition, a slur is a term that is paradigmatically used to express a derogatory attitude towards a particular group of people, namely, the one it applies to. Even if we take derogation/insult to be the purpose of the original and most paradigmatic use of a slur, derogating/insulting someone by calling him "faggot" seems to be very different from derogating/insulting someone by calling him "spic": in the former case, we insult him by classifying him into the group of homosexuals, which is the object of a certain negative emotion, whereas in the latter, we insult him by classifying him into the group of Latin-Americans, which is another object of a negative emotion. Therefore, the acknowledgment of an expressive component should not be a reason (or the occasion) to deprive words like slurs of a truth-conditional meaning. As emphasized by Croom (2014), the presence of that meaning is revealed by the way different slurs interact with other descriptive general terms, as can be exemplified by the following adaptation of his examples:

(i) Diego is a faggot but I did not say anything about his origin.

(ii) # Diego is a spic but I did not say anything about his origin.

Clearly, there is here a contrast between the intelligible (i) and the problematic (ii).