



CONCISE
ENCYCLOPEDIA
OF PHILOSOPHY
OF LANGUAGE

Edited by
PETER V. LAMARQUE

PERGAMON

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Editor's Foreword

At the core of this volume are 80 or so articles I commissioned in the late 1980s and early 1990s for the 10-volume *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics (ELL)*, edited by Ron E. Asher (Pergamon, 1994), for which I was the philosophy Subject Editor. These articles were almost exclusively written by professional philosophers and a high proportion by philosophers who are pre-eminent in the subject about which they write. It would be hard to think of better qualified authors than, for example, Tom Baldwin on theories of meaning, Andrew Brennan on identity, Jonathan Cohen on linguistic philosophy, John Cottingham on rationalism, Mark Crimmins on propositions, Martin Davies on modal logic, Alec Fisher on reasoning, Graeme Forbes on necessity, Elizabeth Fricker on Davidson's philosophy, Sam Guttenplan on the history of logic, Susan Haack on deviant logics, Christopher Hookway on Peirce and Quine, Paul Horwich on truth, Jonathan Lowe on universals, Stephen Read on relevant logic, Mark Sainsbury on Russell, Kim Sterelny on reference, Charles Travis on Wittgenstein, Alan Weir on realism, Tim Williamson on vagueness, Andrew Woodfield on intentionality, and many more besides. This broad spread of expertise gave the philosophy entries in *ELL* a well-grounded authority in this area, no doubt contributing to the high respect accorded to the work as a whole.

When I was invited to edit this *Concise Encyclopedia of Philosophy of Language*, drawing on articles from the original encyclopedia, I had a substantial and impressive core to build on. From there it was a matter of scouring the immense resources of *ELL* to supplement the core subject; I was confronted with an *embarras des richesses*. In *ELL*, I had worked closely with the two semantics Subject Editors, Pieter Seuren and Østen Dahl (whose advice and help I take this opportunity to acknowledge with gratitude) and I have helped myself to many of the articles they commissioned, including their own contributions.

However, one serious issue of principle inevitably arose in my process of selection for the *Concise Encyclopedia of Philosophy of Language*: it concerned how narrowly I was to conceive the range of the subject. Even turning to the semantics topics, commissioned by Seuren and Dahl, I found I was for the most part looking at work, not by philosophers as such, but by theoretical linguists. Of course philosophy of language is not the unique preserve of professional philosophers, so that in itself produced no difficulties in principle. In fact, it became increasingly clear to me that there is no sharp line between work done by theoretical linguists and philosophers of language. All share a common interest in foundational questions about meaning, reference, the semantics of natural language, the nature of signs, the distinction between sense and nonsense, the characterization of logical forms, and so on. However, as I expanded my search there was no doubt that I was being tempted beyond even the loose boundary between philosophy of language and other approaches.

I make no apology for succumbing to this temptation. Certainly I have included articles mostly, but not exclusively, of an empirical nature, which would not normally count as contributions to the philosophy of language: for example, the articles on Apes and Language, Pragmatics, Language Acquisition in the Child, Negation, and some of the articles on logical topics. My belief is that these strengthen the volume, not only because they are likely to be of interest to philosophers who are not familiar with such work, but because they open up the wider context within which issues of a more strictly philosophical character are debated. Thus it is that I have included work by psychologists, literary critics, formal logicians, empirical linguists, as well as theoretical linguists and philosophers. Within the constraints of the project I have also attempted to spread the net wider than the confines of so-called analytical philosophy; the inclusion of the fascinating article on Indian Theories of Meaning introduces a different cultural perspective and the articles on Deconstruction and Literary Structuralism reveal different intellectual currents within the Western tradition.

One slight—I think harmless—anomaly in the collection, which directly reflects its origins in a work devoted to language and linguistics, is what might be seen as an imbalance, at times, in favor of linguistics over philosophy. An example of this is in Section IX: **Key Figures**, where philosophers might be surprised to find entries on Noam Chomsky and Ferdinand de Saussure considerably more substantial than those on, for example, Donald Davidson or Saul Kripke. Of course, comparisons of influence are notoriously hard to make and there is no doubt that Chomsky and Saussure are important figures in philosophy of language; but arguably the influence of Davidson and Kripke is as great, if not more so. However, I was not inclined to tinker with the original contributions, certainly not just for the sake of appearance of parity and not if it meant trimming down valuable articles. The articles on Chomsky and Saussure give an immense amount of illuminating detail which directly engages central issues in philosophy of language and the work of Davidson and Kripke (taking only those two examples) is covered elsewhere in the volume.

The fundamental aim of any encyclopedia is to give the readers ready access to basic information on key topics likely to be of interest to them. But there are different kinds of information and different forms of presentation. In this work, articles take different forms and are presented at different levels of technicality, therefore a word about the underlying rationale might be helpful.

First of all, the articles are not merely listed in alphabetical order, but are grouped into sections covering major divisions of the subject: **Language, Metaphysics, and Ontology; Language and Mind; Truth and Meaning; Reference; Language and Logic; Formal Semantics; Pragmatics and Speech Act Theory; and Key Figures**. Within each section the articles are arranged alphabetically and there are often cross-references to other items in the section (or elsewhere), perhaps showing where ideas are further expanded. It is hoped that this division will make this encyclopedia easier to use by highlighting clusters of topics and giving some structure to the whole. Needless to say the divisions are not hard and fast and items could often appear under different headings.

Some articles are concerned with particular ideas or specialist terms: for example, A Priori, Category-mistake, Sortal Terms, Analyticity, Holism, Language Game, Entailment, Intentionality, Intuitionism, Ontological Commitment, Verificationism, Radical Interpretation, Type/Token Distinction, De Dicto/De Re, Denotation, and so on. The purpose of these entries is, in a relatively concise way, to explain the meanings of the terms and their place in philosophical debates. The information conveyed is of a straightforward explanatory kind, of especial help to those unfamiliar with this basic philosophical terminology.

Other articles take the form of surveys of an intellectual territory: for example, Meaning: Philosophical Theories, Indian Theories of Meaning, Semiotics, Literary Structuralism and Semiotics, Logic: Historical Survey, Pragmatics, Speech Act Theory, and the introductory article itself on Philosophy of Language. The point of these is to sketch out an area of enquiry, drawing a map on which specific debates are located and contextualized. The articles often involve accounting for the historical development of ideas.

Another kind of survey article tracks, not historically but intellectually, a particular area of contention, perhaps around a problematic concept or hypothesis, perhaps connected to a particular school of thought: for example Deconstruction, Sapir–Whorf Hypothesis, Hermeneutics, Semantic Paradoxes, Metaphor, Metaphor in Literature, Rules, Truth, Deviant Logics, Presupposition, and Semantics vs Syntax. These articles are much more likely to contain polemical discussion, assessing rival positions and staking out a point of view of their own. It is worth drawing attention here to the cluster of articles on Speech Act Theory, written by Keith Allan. Together these provide a comprehensive account of the ideas, debates, and controversies in this important branch of the philosophy of language. The divisions into separate articles are largely for ease of access, although anyone who is unfamiliar with the topic could profitably begin with Speech Act Theory: Overview.

There can be no denying that some articles are technically demanding and will not be readily accessible to those without an adequate background in philosophy and/or symbolic logic. Although for the most part the articles in Section IV: **Language and Logic** do not give particular prominence to technical symbolism, many from Section VII: **Formal Semantics** do. The simple fact is that formal semantics is "formal" in the sense that it uses the vocabulary and methodology of logic to attempt a rigorous characterization of selected features of natural language. The survey article on Formal Semantics gives a general overview of the central aims of this approach, although here too, some technical language is used. Much philosophy of language draws on work in logic. Indeed this is a feature of analytical philosophy in general, of which philosophy of language has been a core component.

Given the presence of these relatively technical articles, it is clear that the intended readership of the volume is diverse, including those already knowledgeable about the subject, seeking to consolidate or build on their knowledge, as well as those looking for basic information or just starting out. Such is the way with most encyclopedias. It is my hope that this work will be useful to a wide range of readers at all levels of expertise. It aims to be as comprehensive as possible in covering the main issues and concepts in the philosophy of language of the 1990s, to be a resource as a reference work, and also a volume to dip into for the intrinsic interest of the subject matter. The extensive bibliographies on each topic point to sources for further research.

As stated previously, earlier versions of all the articles (with the exception of the short article on H.P. Grice) first appeared in the *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*. The contributors were invited to modify, update, and edit their articles and many have produced significant changes, not least to their bibliographies. I would like to thank all the contributors for the speed and efficiency with which they cooperated in this process. I would also like to thank the editorial team at Elsevier, in particular Chris Pringle and Janine Smith, for the considerable time and effort they have put into the project, and the constant support and advice they have given me.

Peter Lamarque
University of Hull
September 1997

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SECTION I

Introduction

Philosophy of Language

P. V. Lamarque

Although some of the topics debated within the philosophy of language can be traced back to classical Greek philosophy and the refinements of medieval logic (see Section IX), in fact the label 'philosophy of language' for a distinct branch of the subject did not gain currency until after World War II. Long before then, in the early years of the twentieth century, there had been a clear shift of emphasis in philosophy toward linguistic analysis, which gave a prominence to language within philosophy unprecedented in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but it was not until later that philosophers turned their attention to a systematic study of natural language itself and its foundations. This new inquiry focused on fundamental questions about the nature of meaning, truth, and reference. A convergence of interest developed with theoretical linguistics, spurred on by increasingly sophisticated methods in logic, and the twin areas of semantics and pragmatics came to constitute a central core of analytical philosophy for roughly two decades (the early 1960s to the early 1980s). Since then, to some extent influenced by problems arising from the philosophy of language (on intentionality, propositional attitudes, mental content, thought), there has been a further shift at the center of philosophy toward philosophy of mind, though debate continues on all disputed issues, especially relating to truth and meaning. The main purpose of this introduction is to identify some of the basic areas of contention within philosophy of language and point to the relevant entries in the encyclopedia where they are taken up.

1. The Twentieth-century Origins of Philosophy of Language

Not just any connection between philosophy and language constitutes the subject matter of the philosophy of language. Philosophy in one form or another has always had things to say about language. For example, language (with a sufficiently complex syntactic and generative structure) has been thought to be the distinguishing feature of human beings, a

mark of human rationality; without language there would be no possibility of abstract thought or even perhaps self-reflection. The seventeenth-century philosopher René Descartes emphasized the connection between language and the human intellect. But these general observations about language and human nature to a large extent presuppose the distinctive qualities of language. The philosophy of language, as a more narrowly conceived inquiry, seeks to identify and define precisely what qualities these are, what it is for something to be a language in the first place. Significantly, Noam Chomsky's work on syntactic structures in the 1950s and 1960s led him to reexamine traditional philosophical debates about the 'species-specific' nature of language and the way that language learning has a bearing on fundamental disputes in epistemology. The articles on *Chomsky*, *Rationalism* and *Innate Ideas* follow up that debate. For the historical background of philosophical concerns with language, see the first part of Section IX; several articles in Section II explore the metaphysical and methodological background.

1.1 *Philosophy of Language and Linguistic Philosophy*

As late as 1969, with the publication of *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*, John Searle felt the need to emphasize the difference between the philosophy of language and 'linguistic philosophy,' under the assumption that the latter was much more familiar to his readers. In the 1990s, with linguistic philosophy no longer preeminent, probably the opposite assumption might more reasonably be made; but the fact remains that the two are distinct in important ways. Linguistic philosophy, which had its origins in the logical analysis of Gottlob Frege, Bertrand Russell, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and G. E. Moore at the beginning of the twentieth century, was largely a revolution in *method*, allied to a view about the nature of philosophy. A powerful underlying thought was that philosophical problems—even those of the most traditional kind, about knowledge, ontology, morality, metaphysics—are at a deep level really problems

about language and thus that the best way to approach those problems is to analyze the meanings of relevant concepts and propositions; these analyses, so it was claimed, are likely to show either that the problems are spurious or that they can be illuminated by revealing otherwise unnoticed logical or conceptual relations. In contrast to this, philosophy of language is not a kind of method but a kind of *subject matter* (i.e., focusing on language and meaning themselves). Nor does it rest on any polemical view about the nature of philosophical problems. For a closer look at the characteristics of linguistic philosophy, see *Linguistic Philosophy*.

1.2 Logical Analysis and Philosophy of Language

Although philosophy of language is distinct from linguistic philosophy, there is no doubt that many of the problems addressed by philosophers of language can be traced back to problems connected to logical analysis. Indeed Frege, whose principal work was in the foundations of mathematics and in the development of first-order logic, is widely regarded as the father figure of modern philosophy of language. Frege's new logical symbolism for representing different kinds of judgments—universal and existence statements, identities, conditional statements, and so forth—and his adaptation of the mathematical notation of functions, quantifiers, and variables to sentences of natural languages not only revolutionized the representation of logical patterns of inference but made it possible for the first time to provide a truly perspicuous representation of a sentence's *logical form* as distinct from its surface *grammatical form*. At the heart of logical analysis was the search for logical forms. Many of the areas to which the new logic was applied—anaphora, tense, adverbial modification, identity, definite description, propositional attitude verbs, indexicality, modality—and where logical form was a central analytical tool subsequently developed into specialist studies in the philosophy of language. An even more direct link with philosophy of language comes from Frege's work in semantics, which arose out of his more strictly logical studies, in particular his distinctions between sense and reference and between concept and object (Frege, 1952); his conception of thoughts or propositions has also been of seminal importance (a penetrating study of Frege's contribution to philosophy of language is in Dummett, 1973). For further discussion of the philosophical aspects of logical analysis, see *Concepts; Entailment; Identity; Linguistic Philosophy; Logic: Historical Survey; Logical Form; Proposition; Singular/General Proposition*.

1.3 Verificationism

Other developments in analytical philosophy also became assimilated into the subject matter of philosophy of language. One of these was the veri-

ficationism connected with logical positivism in the 1930s and 1940s. The 'verification principle' was offered as a criterion of meaningfulness or cognitive significance: only propositions that were empirically testable or analytic were deemed meaningful, the rest (which included large tracts of metaphysics, theology, and ethics) being either purely of 'emotive' value or downright nonsense. Although the aims of the verification principle were basically epistemological (logical positivism was conceived as a linguistic version of classical empiricism), the principle itself clearly embodied a view about meaning.

Versions of verificationism have survived the demise of logical positivism and have reappeared in verificationist (or 'antirealist') semantics. Roughly, the idea is to equate the meaning of a statement not with the conditions under which it would be true, but with the conditions under which it could justifiably be asserted. Michael Dummett is a principal exponent of this doctrine, but his concern is not so much to demarcate the meaningful from the meaningless as to relate meaning to learnability. Understanding, or knowledge, of a language, he argues, must be grounded in linguistic practices, including the making of assertions and denials, without relying on a ('realist') conception of truth which might outrun human recognitional capacities. If this view is right, then philosophy of language must draw significantly on epistemology. Verificationist semantics also has implications for logic itself, involving a rejection of the classical law of excluded middle and the semantic principle of bivalence, which holds that every statement is either true or false. Intuitionistic logic grew up on this basis.

See also Intuitionism; Deviant Logics; Realism; Verificationism.

1.4 Ordinary Language Philosophy

Another offshoot of linguistic philosophy was 'ordinary language philosophy', which flourished for a relatively short period after World War II, principally in Oxford, and under the leadership of J. L. Austin. Again ordinary language philosophy was characterized both by its methodology—a close attention to the nuances and fine distinctions in ordinary usage—and its view of philosophy. But the emphasis that it gave to natural languages, rather than the artificial languages studied by formal logicians, and its rejection of the program of logical analysis (along with notions like 'logical form,' 'canonical notation,' 'regimentation') became a powerful influence in the development of speech act theory, as well as theories of communicative intention, speaker's meaning, implicatures, and so forth, which were at the heart of philosophically inspired pragmatics. Indeed the leading figure in both enterprises—ordinary language philosophy and speech act theory—was Austin himself. A distinctive approach to philosophy of language,

characterized by the work of Austin (1962), Strawson (1971), Searle (1969), and perhaps to a lesser degree Grice (1989) (see Sects. 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4 below) developed in Oxford alongside and largely under the influence of ordinary language philosophy. See *Austin, J. L. and Ordinary Language Philosophy* for more details.

1.5 The Importance of Wittgenstein

It would be impossible to survey the origins of modern philosophy of language without mentioning Ludwig Wittgenstein. Yet, in spite of being arguably the most important philosopher of the twentieth century to write about language, his influence on leading theories in semantics and pragmatics is comparatively slight. His early work, which culminated in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921), was closely connected to the program of logical analysis associated with Russell and Frege. Like them he rejected psychologism in logic and sought to establish the fundamental conditions under which a signifying system could represent states of affairs. One of his principal concerns in that work—a concern common also to his later work—was how to draw the boundary between sense and nonsense. He advanced the thesis that is so-called atomic propositions, constituted by simple names whose meanings are logical atoms in the world, *picture* possible or actual states of affairs; all genuinely meaningful complex propositions, he argued, had to be truth-functions of these elementary propositions. Clearly the account is highly idealized and, from the point of view of ordinary applications, puts intolerably severe constraints on meaningfulness.

In his later work, Wittgenstein turned his attention more to natural nonidealized languages and emphasized their ‘multiplicity.’ Disarmingly, in the *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), he insisted that it was not the job of philosophers to offer *theories* of any kind, and thus not theories of meaning, though his famous dictum ‘the meaning of a word is its use in the language,’ along with his other often highly complex observations about the foundations of language, have led commentators to try to reconstruct a theory of meaning from his writings (Kripke 1982; McGinn 1984; Travis 1989). Much attention has focused on his discussion of rule-following, particularly as it bears on arguments against the possibility of private language, and the postulation, in the later work, of ‘language-games’ as determiners of sense. Also of importance is his rejection of the idea that general terms must be defined through necessary and sufficient conditions, a criticism embodied in the idea of ‘family resemblance.’ Detailed examinations of Wittgenstein’s views on language can be found in different articles, notably *Wittgenstein, Ludwig; Picture Theory of Meaning; Language Game; Family Resemblance; Private Language; Rules*.

2. Meaning

If Wittgenstein’s ideas have not fed directly into contemporary semantics, it might be partly due to his antipathy to theory and his disinclination to generalize from his observations about language. No such disinclination has constrained other theorists of meaning. Broadly speaking, it is possible to discern two kinds of approaches taken by philosophers to the analysis of meaning: one takes *truth* to be fundamental, including the conditions under which a sentence is true or false, the other takes *intention* to be fundamental, giving priority to the role of communication. The issue of controversy lies not in the choice between truth-conditions or communicative-intentions in an account of meaning, for it is far from clear that they are in opposition; rather it is the claim that one is more fundamental than the other. A compromise suggestion (though not one that would be universally accepted) might be that the emphasis on truth highlights the *semantic* aspects of language, viewed as those aspects concerned with the representation of (states of) the world; while the emphasis on intention highlights *pragmatic* aspects, viewed as those concerned with communicative exchanges in context. The question of the priority, or basicness, of one with regard to the other was raised in P. F. Strawson’s inaugural lecture at Oxford ‘Meaning and Truth’ (in Strawson 1971); Strawson argued that the notion of truth-conditions cannot be explained without reference to the function of communication, so the latter is more fundamental. (For an analytic account of different theories of meaning in the philosophical tradition see *Meaning: Philosophical Theories*.) It is instructive to compare these approaches with those of a different cultural tradition, cf. *Indian Theories of Meaning* and a different intellectual tradition, cf. *Deconstruction*.

2.1 Meaning and Truth-conditions

Truth-conditional theories of meaning draw partly on the intuition that the meaningfulness of language resides in its ability to represent how things are in the world and partly on advances in logic in describing the semantics of formal or artificial languages. From the latter came the thought that an ideal semantic theory is one that specifies the meaning (i.e., truth-conditions) of every sentence of a language as a theorem derived from a formal axiomatized theory, where the axioms of the theory assign semantic properties to the component expressions of those sentences.

Donald Davidson (1984) pioneered this approach in application to the semantics of natural languages, explicitly drawing on the formal work of Tarski (1956). Rejecting the format *sentence s means that p* for the theorems of the semantic theory, Davidson argues instead for the Tarskian formula *sentence s is true if and only if p*. However, it would be wrong

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