

## CONCLUSION

(i) CREDIT WHERE CREDIT IS DUE. Needless to say, my assault on truth-conditionalism does not imply that it is utterly worthless. As a going theory it possesses virtues, for instance insights that can be accommodated by cognitive semantics. (This helps explain why scientific methodology demands that rivals pay attention to one another; p. 17) Indeed, many truth-conditional analyses convert almost mechanically into attitudinal analyses. Davidson's powerful treatment of events (1), for instance, corresponds to the attitudinal claim (2):

- (1) "Sue passionately kissed Kim" is true  $\equiv \exists x$  (kissed [sue, kim, x] & passionate[x]).
- (2) S thinks "Sue passionately kissed Kim"  $\equiv$  S thinks that  $\exists x$  (kissed [sue, kim, x] & passionate[x]).

Conversion does not always work, as demonstrated by connotation, ambiguity, the liar paradox, and so forth, but it works often enough to justify mining it.

My program makes contact with many sources too. First there is Descartes, whose internalism is congenial to mentalist semantics (although Descartes himself held that beliefs about God and perfection entail the existence of God and perfection, a view which can be seen as a forerunner to Putnam's anti-skeptical argument, rejected in Chapter 4.6). Then there's Locke, whose idea idea stands in sharp opposition to the referential theory. I oppose such referentialism partly because of my conviction that language can be used even in ignorance of the external world (consider for instance the output of AI programs such as ELIZA): semantics and metaphysics are independent (Devitt 1992).

The idea idea continues with Berkeley, where it is part of a broader idealism, and with Hume. Although Hume is not known for contributing to semantic theory, his "non-cognitivist" positions on causality and on morality – a term devised by partisans who assume that cognition involves objective truth-conditions – clearly invoke non-referentialist semantics. Hume's theory of causality, for instance, might be glossed as:

- (3) S thinks “event A causes event B”  $\equiv$  S’s thought, that A happens, regularly precedes S’s thought that B happens.

This is not the way that Hume puts the matter, and it is not necessarily what he would endorse, but I think that it succeeds in capturing a good deal of what he was after while at the same time escaping the standard objection to equating necessary causation with constant conjunction.

Non-cognitivist ethics remains alive and well, as witnessed by Ayer (1936), Stevenson (1937, 1945), Hare (1952), Gibbard (1990), and Johnson (1992). I would suggest that attitudinal semantics provides for a way of understanding what it means for a moral statement to be expressive rather than descriptive, and yet at the same time open to debate, contra relativism. It also, incidentally, provides one way of understanding instrumentalism in the philosophy of science, irrealism in the theory of truth, and subjectivism more generally. My only objection to non-cognitivist ethics resides in the way non-cognitivist ethicists segregate moral and non-moral statements. If attitudinal semantics is correct, then *all* statements are non-cognitivist, in the operative sense. Exemplifying my point, Kant expounds a constructivism that might be assimilated to attitudinal semantics [cf. Johnson (1987)].

Kant’s challenges to naive realism and to the roles of truth and truth-conditions recall another Continental thinker, Nietzsche, who writes:

Let us thus define our task – the value of truth must for once be experimentally *called into question*. [*On the Genealogy of Morals* III: §25; see also *Beyond Good and Evil*, §1, and Stich (1990: Chap. 5)]

More seriously, by rejecting the relevance of truth as objectivistically understood, my project makes contact with pragmatism and its disparagement of truth as transcendently understood. Peirce writes:

You only puzzle yourself by talking about this metaphysical “truth” and metaphysical “falsity”, that you know nothing about. All you have any dealings with are your doubts and beliefs, with the course of life that forces new beliefs upon you and gives you power to doubt old beliefs. If your terms “truth” and “falsity” are taken in such senses as to be definable in terms of doubt and belief and the course of experience . . . well and good . . . But if by truth and falsity you mean something not definable in terms of doubt and belief in any way, then you are talking about entities of whose existence you can know nothing, and which Ockham’s razor would clean shave off. [1905: 257]

Not coincidentally, Peirce’s treatment of truth is accompanied by a stand on meaning:

The entire intellectual purport (significance, meaning) of any symbol consists in the total of all general modes of rational conduct which, conditionally upon all the possible different circumstances and desires, would ensue upon the acceptance of the symbol. [1905: 290]

Like the writings of Hume, Peirce's could be interpreted as implying if not advocating some sort of attitudinal semantics.

Peirce influenced James, of course, who had a major impact on Quine, it turns out [see Quine (1986: 6)]. Now Quine, one of my heroes, is connected to a number of doctrines, on top of pragmatism and relativism, that can be compared and contrasted with my own: semantic nihilism, semantic behaviorism, truth-conditionalism, deflationism, and verificationism. To begin with, Quine emphasizes that sentences do not have meanings (1980: 12, 22). That sounds like semantic nihilism, but Quine accepts the property of meaningfulness, denying only meanings as individual entities. I like the sentiment, but not Quine's way of putting it, for only a referentialist would imagine that saying "sentences have meanings" commits one to the existence of meanings as individual (non-syncategorematic thing-like) entities.

Quine's anti-entity stance appears to vanish when he identifies the meaning of an observation sentence with its stimulus meaning, which is an ordered set and hence an entity. Specifically, for speaker *S* and observation pronouncement *P*, the stimulus meaning of *P* is the ordered pair consisting of *P*'s affirmative and negative stimulus meanings – the sets of stimuli that would provoke *S* to assent to, or dissent from, *P* (1960: §8). The appeal to stimuli that *would* provoke assent sounds intensional, but Quine explains that "dispositions to speech are for me actual enduring states of nerves". Given that Quine also regards cognitive states as identical to neural states (1986: 429), presumably there is a mapping in at least one direction between the claims of (dispositional-)behavioral semantics and the claims of attitudinal semantics.

However, Quine's reductionism is just an article of faith. Given our current state of knowledge, it seems more productive to me to ground behavioral counterfactuals in psychological states than in neuro-states. First, you know the meaning of the observation sentence "An elephant is in the room", and you know which stimuli would tend to prompt assent, but do you know how to describe those stimuli? Using the vocabulary of neurology, I could hardly begin ("S assents when S's retinal rods . . ."); but using the vocabulary of psychology, I can begin ("S assents when S thinks . . .") and continue ("there is a very large, gray, long-nosed, . . ."). Second, behaviorist semantics draws clumsy distinctions among observation sentences, eternal sentences, and so forth. Though epistemologically relevant, semantically they deserve a uniform framework, as attitudinal semantics provides.

Quine's behaviorist semantics is a version of causal role semantics or CRS, though it appears to be duplex rather than pure (p. 32). Quine writes:

Ideally . . . two sentences mean the same proposition when they are true in all the same possible worlds . . . But still this idea affords us no general way of equating sentences in real life. [1970: 4]

This can be understood in a variety of ways. Perhaps the first statement admits ontic truth-conditionalism while the second denies epistemic truth-conditionalism; perhaps the first statement admits truth-conditional semantics as a theory of a logically perfect language while the second one denies it of natural language; perhaps the first statement is a careless concession while the second one stakes Quine's actual position; perhaps, in line with Quine's otherwise stated deflationism, the first statement merely acknowledges consequences of the disquotational T-schema while the second statement denies that they contribute to a theory of meaning.

Quine's occasional allusions to truth-conditions make sense, vis-a-vis a substantive theory of meaning, given that Quine sometimes expresses a holistic kind of verificationism:

The Vienna Circle espoused a verification theory of meaning but did not take it seriously enough. If we recognized with Peirce that the meaning of a sentence turns purely on what would count as evidence for its truth, and if we recognize with Duhem that theoretical sentences have their evidence not as single sentences but only as larger blocks of theory, then the indeterminacy of translation . . . is the natural conclusion. [1969: 80]

However, I do not see how verificationism squares with deflationism.

To recap, I find many strands of thought in Quine. I like his anti-entity stance; indeed I believe it is justified in view of the argument from ignorance (Chap. 2). I like the naturalism of his CRS, although I think that his rejection of a conceptual or mentalist version of CRS is not justified. I believe he did not always keep CRS distinct from verificationism specifically or truth-conditionalism generally, and I believe the latter made him regard the indeterminacy of reference as almost paradoxical. But the indeterminacy thesis – that reference is relative to a translation manual, a conceptual scheme, or a subject's way of thinking – comports well with the subjectivism of attitudinal semantics.

Deep parallels allegedly run between Quine and Wittgenstein. For instance, although I've never seen this mentioned in the literature, pragmatism appears to have influenced the later Wittgenstein as much as it did Quine. In the opening lines of his *Blue Book*, Wittgenstein suggests that we can answer the question "What is length?" by asking "How do we measure length?" and that

we can likewise get at the answer to “What is meaning?” by asking some different, empirical question. The different question that I suggest is “How do we ascribe meaning?”; and to answer it, I suggest, we need to further ask “How do we ascribe beliefs, desires, disdain, and other attitudes?” Of course Wittgenstein is also known for emphasizing that the meaning of an expression is to be found in its use. This slogan, if taken as a claim about what constitutes meaning, happens to be incompatible with mentalist semantics, which holds that an expression may possess meaning even if it’s idly contemplated by a solitary castaway. Taken as a methodological injunction, however, Wittgenstein’s slogan simply states the empiricist principles that underlie my work.

The early Wittgenstein is famous for recognizing limits to what can be said, and in this way the conclusion of the *Tractatus* anticipates my own limitative theorem (p. 239). The later Wittgenstein is famous for comparing language to a toolbox, which I think is right, and to denying that the meaning of “game” is truth-conditional, and in this too he anticipates my work (Chap. 2).<sup>1</sup>

I say only that Wittgenstein “anticipates” my work because he has not been a direct influence and because my own work differs from his in both substance and method. First, I do not think that language is much like a game. Speakers are “players” who make “moves” according to rules, it is true; but, paradigmatically, speakers do not enter into language communities voluntarily, speaking is not an end in itself, speakers do not engage in make-believe or compete against other speakers for linguistic points, and so forth. The Wittgensteinian metaphor is arresting, but I question its systematic usefulness, as I imagine Wittgenstein himself would.<sup>2</sup>

Second, I do not question the value of systematic philosophizing. Where Wittgenstein evidently believed that philosophy serves as nothing but ad hoc therapy, I believe that philosophical inquiry is continuous with scientific inquiry, that it has given us grand theories of which some appear to be true, and that it holds the promise of yielding additional useful theories, some of them dealing with language.

Third, I reject Wittgenstein’s private-language argument. According to one interpretation, Wittgenstein argues that if any language were internal

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<sup>1</sup> As an antidote to Wittgenstein’s game claim, I heartily recommend Suits 1978.

<sup>2</sup> Wittgenstein’s actual position (1953: §7) is that language-games are primarily “those games by means of which children learn their native language” (though I doubt that children learn to speak from playing games), and that by extension language-games are “primitive languages” themselves, such as Wittgenstein’s contrived “slab” language (though I doubt that it is importantly like English). Wittgenstein left it to his followers to conceive of genuine natural languages as themselves games.

and idiosyncratic then there would be no objective norms regarding its proper and improper uses, which is allegedly absurd. From the perspective of an empirical naturalist, however, the argument begs the question. The natural order consists of facts, not values, except where values are kinds of subjective fact. We can criticize a given use of language because *we* don't like it, but as an object in itself it can only be described.

Fourth, I do not think that language is a "form of life". Indeed, I don't even know what a form of life is. I believe in *ways* of life, I believe that they interact with the language one speaks, and I believe that philosophy of language has much to learn from sociology and social psychology. I do not believe, however, that one's language can render religious belief "not [assertably] unreasonable" (Wittgenstein 1967: 58), nor do I see that distinct "forms of life" prevent the theist and atheist from contradicting each other.

Perhaps Wittgenstein embodied a form of life. Certainly he personified a particular ethos, which may or may not be admirable. However, I believe that philosophers, whether they succeed as paragons or not, should at least articulate their philosophy according to rational standards. I myself shall eschew oracular pronouncements in favor of reasoned arguments, documented references, and the most direct prose that I can muster, and I promise never to write a book just for those who have already shared my thoughts.

(ii) RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT. Classical logic, the naïve T-schema (T), and the effability thesis of Chapter 8 are incompatible, and therefore at least one is mistaken. I claim that it is (T) which is in error, I observe that the untenability of truth-conditional truth makes truth-conditionalism untenable, and I explain (T)'s deceptive attractiveness as parasitic on the genuine soundness of the attitudinal T-schema ( $T_{\psi}$ ). The resulting attitudinal conception of truth differs in important ways from the old conception. These two different conceptions of truth may be called the *objectivist* and the *subjectivist*. The objectivist conception claims that every proposition is either true or false (or neither) regardless of what anyone thinks about it, and that we possess the power to speak of such truth-values even if we can't always ascertain them. The subjectivist in contrast claims that truth and falsity, as predicates of sentences, statements, and beliefs, are just like sentences, statements, and beliefs themselves: they are products of agent subjects and hence are ultimately grounded in some subject's beliefs. To put it another way, the difference between "P" in (4) and "P" in (5) is not the difference between belief and fact, and it is not the difference between "P" as embodied in some historical subject and "P" as platonic object. Rather, it's the difference between "P" as explicitly embodied in X and "P" as implicitly embodied in the writer and the readers of this page.

- (4) X thinks that P.
- (5) P.

The objectivist conception of truth, in short, is contravened by the liar paradox.

The rejection of objectivist truth entails the rejection of TC semantics. TC semantics is also challenged by the findings reported in Chapter 7, on quotation, in Chapter 6, on ambiguity, and in Chapter 5, on pejoratives. The orthodox theory of meaning cannot be sustained, and something else is required. What I propose, attitudinal semantics, is described and defended in Chapters 3 and 4. Even if I be mistaken about attitudinal semantics, truth-conditional semantics remains untenable, according to the Argument from Ignorance in Chapter 2.

Chapter 1 suggests that semantic theory is responsible for addressing the research areas repeated here.

translation	indexicality
intentionality	vagueness
information, truth	ambiguity
inference	anomaly
intensionality	prototypicality
compositionality	perspective
illocutionary force	register
lexical relations	figurative speech
presupposition	connotation
implicature, implicature	diachrony
thematic roles	

So far I have argued that attitudinal semantics can provide better accounts of connotation, ambiguity, and aspects of truth than TC semantics, and I have made programmatic claims regarding illocutionary force (Chap. 3.2.1), anomaly (Saka 1998a: Chap. 3.2), intensionality (Chap. 5.9xiv), and the nature of compositionality (Chap. 7.3.1). In addition, intentionality, indexicality, perspective and prototypicality positively seem to invite mentalist analyses. Carrying them out remains as future work.

(iii) CODA. What can explain the popularity of TC semantics, and the resistance to attitudinal semantics? One answer, I think, can be found in the joke about the drunkard who searches under a lamp post for his house key; that's not where he dropped it, but it's easier to see there than on the porch. Likewise, TC semantics generates a lot of light. This is a virtue, and it is to

the credit of TC semantics that it is clear enough and precise enough for us to see that within its scope meaning is not to be found. Instead of basking in the light, however, it would serve us better to look elsewhere, even if that means fumbling in the dark.

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# INDEX

- Abbott, Barbara, 202  
Adequacy conditions, 161, 219  
Adler, Jonathan, xi  
Allan, Keith, 151  
Allusion, 211  
Almog, 21  
Alston, William, 11, 62, 80  
Altman, Andrew, 135  
Ambiguity, 12, 155ff  
    componential, 171  
    conjunction reduction test, 167  
    contradictory test, 170, 172ff  
    defined, 163, 177  
    direct/indirect, 170  
    homonymy, 166  
    identification problem, 156  
    indexicals and, 172f  
    lexical, 163ff  
    literal/non-literal, 169  
    negation, 171  
    polysemy, 167  
    pragmatic, 52, 170, 203, 230ff  
    referential, 171  
    representation problem, 155  
    resolution problem, 156  
    scopal, 163  
    syntactic, 163  
    type/token, 167, 170  
    use/mention, 192, 204f, 210  
    vagueness and, 172ff  
Analysis, *see also* Attitude-conditional analyses  
    semantic, 4f, 21, 59ff, 65, 67ff, 108f  
Analyticity, 25, 28, 60, 65, 98  
Anderson, Mike, xii  
Animal cognition, 86  
Anomaly, semantic, 12, 41, 129, 161, 220  
Anti-foundationalism, 15, 97  
Anti-realism, 22, 100ff, 111, 248  
Antony, Louise, 54  
A priori philosophy, 15, 75, 97f, 116  
Aquinas, 113  
Aqvist, Lennart, 37  
Aristotle, 113  
Armour-Garb, Bradley, 218  
Aronson, 238  
Ascriptivism, 73, 87  
Asimov, Isaac, 170, 201  
Assertability, 10, 23f, 73, 127, 234, 242  
Assertion, 209  
Association, mental v, 13, 146, 152, 179, 196–199, 202, 205, 212  
Atlas, Jay, 11, 27, 124, 155, 157, 168, 174  
Attitude-conditional analyses, 74, 87, 107, 140, 175ff, 199ff, 236ff  
Attitude-conditional schema, 5, 59, 68, 241  
Attitudes, 52, 65ff, 69ff, 78f, 95, 113, 143, 176  
Attributive vs. referential, 71, 133  
Augustine, 104  
Austin, J.L., 11, 13, 19, 28, 136  
Avramides, 30  
Ayer, A.J., 248  
Azzouni, Jody, 235  
  
Bach, Kent, 11, 27, 73, 89, 136, 138, 200  
Baghramian, Maria, 75, 76, 117  
Baker, G.P., 19, 27, 36, 92  
Baker, L., 110  
Ballmer, T, 12  
Barber, Alex, 54  
Bar-Hillel, Yehoshua, 220  
Barker, Stephen, 29  
Bar-on, Dorit, 91

- Barwise, Jon, 20, 231, 233  
 Bates, Elizabeth, 42  
 Beall, J.C., 12, 218, 221  
 Beaver, 11  
 Behaviorism, 59, 249  
 Belief-desire psychology, 82ff  
 Beliefs, 53, 65ff, 69ff, 78f, 95, 143, 176  
 Belnap, Nuel, 37, 221, 222, 235  
 Benbaji, Yitzhak, 181  
 Bennett, Jonathan, 81, 181, 187, 220  
 Berkeley, George, 247  
 Berry's paradox, 115, 246  
 Bezuidenhout, Anne, 18, 27, 106  
 Bianchi, Claudia, 14  
 Blackburn, Simon, 46, 123, 135, 137, 151, 218  
 Block, Ned, 31, 32  
 Bloomfield, Loenard, 59  
 Bochvar, D., 224  
 Boer, Steven, 13  
 Bohnert, Herbert, 36  
 Borg, Emma, 27  
 Botterell, Andrew, 186  
 Brabanter, Philippe de, xi  
 Bracket Theory, 134  
 Brandom, Robert, 31, 32, 122, 225  
 Bromand, Joachim, 229  
 Brown, Penelope, 13  
 Burge, Tyler, 220  
 Buridan, Jean, 221  
 Burrige, Kate, 151
- Cancellability, 209  
 Cann, Ronnie, 20, 50, 98  
 Caplan, Ben, xi, 182, 192  
 Cappelen, Herman, 27, 180f, 191–194, 200–210, 215  
 Carnap, Rudolf, 50, 51, 70  
 Carston, Robyn, 11, 27, 197  
 Category mistakes, 12, 41, 129, 161, 220  
 Causation, 248  
 Chambers, J., 13  
 Channell, Joanna, 12  
 Charity, 75ff, 117, 180  
 Cherniak, Christopher, 76  
 Chierchia, Gennaro, 20, 37, 50, 51  
 Chihara, Charles, 221, 225
- Chomsky, Noam, 9, 12, 15, 34, 36, 37, 60, 158  
 Churchland, Paul, 99, 111  
 Clapin, Hugh, 10  
 Clark, E., 13  
 Clark, H., 12, 207, 210  
 Clark, M., 234  
 Cognitive argument, 95, 108  
 Cognitive semantics, 3, 32, 117; *see also* Association; Attitude-conditional schema; Embodiment; Internalism; Mental models; Mentalism; Subjectivity  
 Cognitive suicide, 110  
 Cognitivism, 16, 60  
 Cohen, L. Jonathan, 76, 166, 167, 170  
 Commands, 36, 157  
 Communication, 46, 102, 136, 166  
 Communicative lies, 133  
 Competence, 15, 16, 54, 60, 132  
 Componential analysis, 26, 171  
 Compositionality, 10, 27, 105, 150, 180  
 Concepts as procedures, 197f  
 Conceptual role semantics, 31, 117, 122  
 Congruence thesis, 182  
 Conjunction reduction test, 167  
 Conjunction Theory, 123ff  
 Conjunctive truth-conditions, 158, 162  
 Connotation, 6, 13, 40, 151  
 Construction, 139, 197, 205  
 Content, narrow vs. wide, 94, 116, 166; *see also* Propositions  
 Content-container dualism, 87ff, 96  
 Context, 72, 92, 166, 200, 240; *see also* Indexicals  
 Contextualism (theory of meaning), 27, 56, 106, 174  
 Contextualist Theory (of truth), 230ff  
 Contradictory test, 170, 172ff  
 Convention, 30, 39, 42, 132, 135, 137, 142, 148, 152, 168, 169, 208, 212  
 Coordination problem, 32, 107, 139  
 Copp, David, 135, 137  
 Corazza, Eros, 12  
 Covariance argument, 93  
 Cresswell, Max, 12, 18, 20, 35, 43, 48, 98, 116, 117

- Criterion of second-order explanation, 15, 192, 233
- Cruse, D.A., 11, 31
- Cummins, Robert, xi, 11, 116
- Dasher, Richard, 14
- Davidson, Donald, 8, 11, 12–13, 18, 19, 20, 35, 36, 43, 44, 48, 50, 53, 65, 67, 73, 75, 76, 77, 79, 87, 92, 98, 113, 114, 116, 117, 122, 161, 165, 166, 169, 173, 180, 181, 187, 194, 207, 218, 219, 247
- Davidson, Richard, 135
- Davis, Wayne, 11
- Deane, Paul, 60
- De dicto, 52, 70, 73, 95
- Demonstratives, 186
- Dennett, Daniel, 70, 73, 75, 76, 77, 78, 81, 82
- Denotation, 20
- Descartes, Rene, 88, 113, 247
- Designation, 20
- De Sousa, Ronald, 70
- Determination argument, 91
- Devitt, Michael, 8, 16, 22, 48, 53, 54, 76, 81, 100, 111, 115, 117, 247
- Diachronic change, 14, 146, 194
- Dialectic, scientific, 17f
- Dialects, 45; *see also* Idiolect; Sociolect
- Dialethic Theory, 225ff
- Dickson, Paul, 190
- Dictionaries, 164
- Diessel, Holger, 12
- Direct discourse, 210
- Disjunctive truth-conditions, 156
- Disquotational T-sentences, 19, 43, 122, 161
- Dogmatism, 15, 97, 116
- Domain of discourse, 41, 171
- Donnellan, Keith, 132, 220
- Dowden, Bradley, 225
- Dowty, David, 20, 50
- Dualism, content-container, 87ff, 96
- Dukofsky, Evan, 125
- Dummett, Michael, 18, 19, 23, 38, 50, 122
- Duplex theories, 32, 106, 139
- Echoic speech, 147, 211
- Eco, Umberto, 31
- Effability thesis, 217
- Eklund, Matti, 218
- Ekman, Paul, 135
- Elugardo, Reinaldo, 206
- Embodiment, 5, 33, 34, 62, 140, 240–245; *see also* Internalism; Subjectivity
- Empirical problems, 28, 34
- Empiricism, 14, 18, 59, 64, 84, 97
- Empty quotation, 183, 186
- Endearment, terms of, 151
- Engel, Paul, 219
- Epithets, 121ff  
catalog of, 144  
slurs, 148
- Equivocation, 160
- Erteschik-Shir, Nomi, 10
- Erwin, Edward, 13
- Etchemendy, John, 231, 233
- Euphemism, 151
- Evaluatives, *see* Endearment; Honorifics; Moral judgment; Pejoratives
- Evans, Gareth, 19
- Evolutionary argument, 81, 100
- Expressivism, 22, 28, 121
- Fad fascism, 17
- Fallibilism, 15; *see also* Dogmatism
- Fauconnier, Gilles, 13, 33, 73, 205
- Fawcett, Peter, 94
- Felicity-conditions, 38, 136
- Fellbaum, Christiane, 11, 31
- Field, Hartry, 20, 31, 32, 53, 55, 70, 100, 166
- Figurative language, 13, 33f, 134, 145, 168ff
- Fillmore, Charles, 11, 12
- Fine, Arthur, 99, 100, 101, 102, 111
- Flynn, Charles, 135, 145, 149, 150
- Fodor, Jerry, 8, 10, 11, 16, 26, 32, 46, 81, 102, 116
- Force, 36f, 67f, 74, 194
- Formal semantics, 145
- Form vs. function, 26, 67, 179, 188, 192

- Foundationalism, 15, 97  
 Frege, Gottlob, 11, 14, 19, 21, 22, 29, 37, 38, 46, 50, 102, 117, 130, 135, 138, 173  
  
 Gaifman, Haim, 11, 234  
 Gamut, L.T.F., 20  
 Gap Theory, 223ff  
 Garcia-Carpintero, Manuel, 181, 185, 200  
 Gardner, Martin, 200  
 Gardner, R.C., 152,  
 Garfield, Jay, 117  
 Garson, James, xi  
 Gauker, Christopher, xi, 25, 32, 75, 81, 89, 90, 234, 238, 241, 242  
 Geeraerts, Dirk, 13, 14  
 Generics, 40  
 Gerrig, Richard, 207, 210  
 Gettier problem, 107  
 Gibbs, Raymond, 13, 134  
 Gillon, Brendan, 18, 162–73, 178  
 Glanzberg, Michael, 218  
 Glock, Jans-Johann, 19  
 God, 244  
 Goddard, L., 182  
 Goldman, Alvin, 77  
 Goldstein, Laurence, 181, 234  
 Gomez-Torrente, Mario, 180, 186, 210, 215  
 Gordon, R., 77  
 Gorfain, David, 156  
 Grammaticality, 66, 182f, 191, 193, 220  
     criterion of, 190  
 Grandy, Richard, 73, 76  
 Greenawalt, Kent, 122  
 Greenberg, Jeff, 142  
 Grelling's paradox, 246  
 Grice, Paul, 9, 11, 19, 28, 30, 32, 63, 114, 126, 132, 136, 200  
 Grim, Patrick, xi, 17, 92, 127, 129, 131  
 Gross, Steven, 12  
 Gumperz, John., 197  
 Gupta, Anil, 221, 222, 235  
  
 Haack, Susan, xi  
 Hacker, P.M.S., 19, 27, 92  
 Haiman, John, 65  
 Hare, R.M., 41, 248  
  
 Harman, Gilbert, 31, 32, 51, 76, 162, 177  
 Harnish, R.M., 11, 117, 136  
 Harris, Zellig, 10  
 Hartman, Rhonda, 122  
 Hate speech, 121ff  
     catalog of, 144  
     slurs, 148  
 Hatim, Basil, 9  
 Hawkins, John, 60  
 Heim, Irene, 50, 51  
 Henderson, David, 76  
 Herzberger, Hans, 235  
 Hierarchy Theory, 229ff  
 Higginbotham, James, 50, 93  
 Hirst, Graeme, 156  
 Holism, epistemological, 14  
 Holism, semantic, 56, 61  
 Holmes, Janet, 13  
 Homonymy, 166  
 Homophonic T-sentences, 19, 43, 122, 161  
 Honorifics, 151  
 Horn, Laurence, 124, 171, 224  
 Horwich, Paul, 31, 32, 55, 92, 100, 101, 219  
 Hume, David, 247  
 Hymes, Dell, 13  
 Hyperintensionality, 35, 55  
  
 Idealized cognitive models, *see* Prototypes  
 Identification problem, 156, 167, 170, 172ff  
 Idiolect, 9, 64, 132, 148, 183  
 Ignorance, argument from, 36, 73, 100, 112  
 I-language, 34, 112, 149, 166, 191, 197, 247  
 Illocutionary force, 36f, 67f, 74, 194  
 Imagination, 11, 105, 198, 212  
 Imperatives, 36, 157  
 Implicature, 11, 30, 126, 136, 142  
 Indeterminacy of reference, 250  
 Indexicals, 11, 35, 93, 123, 128, 166, 210, 230ff, 240  
     as ambiguous, 171ff  
 Inference, 10  
 Inferentialism, 31, 117, 122  
 Information, 10, 122  
 Intensions, 10, 21, 33, 52, 70, 73, 95, 113, 151  
 Intensives, 41  
 Intentionality, *see* Reference; Truth  
 Intentions, 29ff, 117, 173, 196, 198f, 232

- Internalism, 34f, 112, 149, 166, 197, 247;  
*see also* Embodiment; Subjectivity
- Interrogatives, 37, 74
- Intonation, 135, 150
- Intuition, 14, 74, 92–95, 98f, 113, 169,  
 192f, 207, 233f, 240; *see also*  
 Second-order explanation
- Irrelevance objection, 108, 116
- Isaac, Alistair, 125
- Jackendoff, Ray, xi, 11, 26, 33, 34
- Jackman, Henry, 76
- Jacquette, Dale, 98
- James, William, 249
- Jennings, R.E., 11, 14, 60, 169
- Johnson, Mark, 13, 33, 34, 40, 105, 169,  
 240, 248
- Johnson-Laird, Philp, 31, 33
- Jorgensen, Julia, xi, 13, 168, 215
- Kant, Immanuel, 248
- Kaplan, David, 232
- Katz, Jerrold, 8, 11, 19, 26, 51, 60, 116
- Keefe, Rosanna, 12
- Kempson, Ruth, 27, 167
- Kennedy, Chris, xi
- Kirby, D.M., 152
- Kirkland, Shari, 142
- Kiteley, Murray, 117
- Kittay, Eva, 11, 13
- Knowledge, analysis of, 107
- Knowledge, sociology of, 15, 104f,  
 112, 164
- Knowledge of meaning, 42ff, 180
- Kratzer, Angelika, 50
- Kripke, Saul, 10, 21, 221, 222, 223
- Kusch, Martin, 106
- Labov, William, 46
- Ladd, Robert, 150
- Lakoff, George, 13, 33, 34, 36, 40, 150,  
 168, 169, 197
- Lambrecht, Knud, 10
- Langendoen, Terry, xi
- Language, form and function, 26, 67, 179,  
 188, 192
- Language acquisition, 157, 169, 194
- Language and mind, 86–90
- Language change, 146, 194
- Language game, 251
- Language understanding, 45, 62, 109
- Language uses, 148, 190, 194, 201, 213
- Larson, Richard, 19, 35, 50, 55
- Latour, Bruno, 100
- Laudan, Larry, 100
- Laurence, Stephen, 30, 54
- Law, the, 122, 208
- Lea, Timothy, 17
- Legal objection, 208
- Lehrer, Adrienne, 11, 13, 168, 207
- Lehrer, K., xi
- Leiber, Justin, xi
- LePore, 27, 43, 180f, 191–94, 200–210, 215
- Levinson, Stephen, 11, 13, 27, 130, 197
- Lewis, David, 4, 18, 20, 36, 50, 76, 77,  
 98, 190
- Lexical relations, 11
- Lexicography/lexicology, 164f
- Liar paradox, 97ff
- Attitudinal, 239
- Infinite, 221
- Loop, 221, 236, 237
- Self-Negation, 224
- Strengthened, 222, 224, 226, 234
- Libel, 122
- Liles, Bruce, 36
- Limitative theorem, 239
- Literal language, 169; *see also* Figurative  
 language
- Littmann, Greg, 229
- Locke, John, 247
- Ludlow, Peter, 117
- Ludwig, Kirk, 76
- Luntley, Michael, 50
- Lycan, William, xi, 18, 19, 31, 37, 43, 50,  
 91, 98, 117, 162, 163, 218
- Lyons, John, 167
- MacCormac, Earl, 13
- Machery, Edouard, 94, 116
- MacLaury, Robert, 13
- MacWhinney, Brian, 42
- Mamet, David, 149
- Marcus, Ruth, 73
- Margalit, Avishai, 171

- Mark thesis, 182  
 Martin, Robert L., 211  
 Martinich, A.P., 117  
 Matsuda, Mari, 144  
 Mauranen, Anna, 9  
 McCarthy, Tim, xi  
 McCawley, James, 36  
 McConnell-Ginet, Sally, 20, 37, 50, 51  
 McDowell, John, 18, 19, 98  
 McGee, Vann, xi, 230, 241, 242  
 McGinn, Colin, 31, 98, 91  
 Meaning, 9–14, 62  
 Meaning, knowledge of, 42ff, 180  
 Meaninglessness, 127, 129  
 Melnick, Arthur, xi  
 Mentalism characterized, 3, 22, 30, 46, 60, 74, 117; *see also* Cognitive semantics; cognitivism; internalism; subjectivity  
 Mental models, 33, 197  
 Mention, 199; *see also* Quotation  
 Metalanguage, *see* Hierarchy Theory; Negation; Quotation  
 Metalinguistic citation, 203  
 Metaphor, 13, 33f, 134, 145, 169f  
 Methodological solipsism, 16  
 Methodology, 14–18, 210; *see also* Adequacy conditions  
 Metonymy, 13, 134, 169f  
 Meyerhoff, Miriam, 13  
 Michael, Emily, 225  
 Miller, Alexander, 117  
 Miller, George, 31  
 Mind and language, 86–90  
 Minimalism, 27  
 Misrepresentation, 115  
 Mixed discourse, 205  
 Modality, 16, 20, 22, 54, 64f, 92, 129, 156  
 Model theory, 19  
 Montague, Richard, 20  
 Montaigne, Michel de, 77  
 Mood, 36f, 67f, 74  
 Mood problem, 29, 33  
 Moral judgment, 127, 151  
 Morris, Charles, 4  
 Motivation problem, 107  
 Multi-proposition Theory, 138ff  
 Munday, Jeremy, 9  
 Munro, P., 211  
 Names as slurs, 150  
 Name Theory, 179f  
 Narrow content, 94, 117, 166  
 Naturalism, 3, 16, 54, 60, 160  
 Neale, Stephen, 15, 138, 139  
 Necessary-and-sufficient conditions, *see* Truth-conditions  
 Necessity, 65, 129  
 Negation, 124, 141, 171, 207  
 Neisser, Ulric, 208  
 Nida, Eugene, 11  
 Nietzsche, Friedrich, 248  
 Nisbett, Richard, 127  
 Non-cognitivism, meta-ethical, 151, 248  
 Non-proposition Theory, 127ff, 131ff, 220ff  
 Nonsense Theory, 127ff  
 No-Reference Theory, 131ff  
 Nozick, Robert, 81  
 Nuland, Sherwin, 221  
 Nunberg, Geoffrey, 12, 168  
 Nye, Andrea, 117  
 Objectivism, 34; *see also* Formal Semantics; Platonism; Referentialism; Truth-conditionalism; Subjectivity  
 Omniscience, 244  
 Opacity, 10, 21, 33, 52, 70, 73, 95, 151  
 Ostension, 197ff  
 Paradigm, scientific, 50, 104, 117  
 Paradoxes, 244ff; *see also* Liar paradox  
 Paralinguistic communication, 135, 150  
 Parataxis, 181f  
 Parsons, Charles, 231  
 Parsons, Kathryn, 159, 166  
 Partee, Barbara, 20, 181  
 Patterson, Doug, xi  
 Peacocke, Christopher, 23  
 Pejoratives, 121ff  
     catalog of, 144  
     slurs, 148  
 Pelletier, Francis, 11  
 Performance-conditions, 59, 136f

- Perjury, 208  
 Perry, John, 12, 34, 89, 240  
 Perspective, 13, 147, 151, 210f  
 Peters, Stanley, 156  
 Phillips, David, xi, 41  
 Pietroski, Paul, 33, 34  
 Pinkal, Manfred, 12  
 Plain mentioning, 189  
 Plantinga, Alvin, 80, 81  
 Plato, 15, 19, 113  
 Platonism, 16, 33, 60, 89, 139, 160, 208  
 Platonism problem, 33, 139  
 Platts, Mark, 19  
 Polysemy, 167  
 Portner, Paul, 50  
 Possible worlds, 20, 22, 92  
 Pragmatic ambiguity, 52, 170, 201, 230ff  
 Pragmatics, socio-, 143ff  
 Pragmatics, truth-conditional, 27, 56, 106, 174  
 Pragmatics-semantics distinction, 4, 14, 56, 135, 140, 169  
 Pragmatism, 248f  
 Pratkanis, Anthony, 238  
 Predelli, Stefano, 191, 198, 200  
 Presupposition, 11, 97, 130, 209  
 Priest, Graham, 221, 225, 227, 228, 230, 237, 246  
 Principles P and Q, 197ff  
 Prior, Arthur, 181  
 Propaganda, 238  
 Proper names as slurs, 150  
 Propositional attitudes, 52, 65ff, 69ff, 78f, 95, 143, 176  
 Propositions, 22, 89, 127ff, 131ff, 139, 160ff, 220ff  
 Prototypes, 13, 33, 40, 148, 212  
 Psychologism, *see* Mentalism; Naturalism  
 Pullum, Geoffrey, xiii, 212  
 Punctuation, xiii, 212  
 Puns, 159, 204  
 Putnam, Hilary, 23, 31, 46, 76, 94, 103, 166  
 Pyszczyński, S., 142
- Quantifier domain, 41, 171  
 Questions, 37, 74  
 Quine, W.V., 23, 31, 50, 75, 76, 89, 167, 190, 229, 249
- Quotation  
 allusion, 211  
 direct discourse, 210  
 echoic, 147, 211  
 empty, 183, 186  
 metalinguistic citation, 203  
 mixed discourse, 205  
 punctuation, 212  
 scare quotes, 184, 201  
 use/mention defined, 198f
- Racist epithets, 121ff  
 catalog of, 144  
 slurs, 148
- Rationality, 101, 110, 128, 236–239, 243, 245
- Rational psychology, 82ff
- Read, Stephen, 182
- Realism, 22, 100ff, 111, 248
- Recanati, Francois, 19, 27, 50, 182, 187, 188, 199, 206
- Reduplication, 41
- Reference, 4, 9, 19ff, 29, 131ff, 186, 199, 217, 223
- Reference thesis, 181
- Referentialism, 20f, 34, 70, 73, 117, 223;  
*see also* Objectivism
- Referential vs. attributive, 71, 133
- Register, 13, 151
- Regress objection, 109
- Reimer, Marga, 92, 206, 209
- Relativism, 23, 76, 87, 234
- Reported discourse, 205
- Representation problem, 155ff
- Rescher, Nicholas, 220, 224, 225
- Resemblance, 118, 202
- Resolution problem, 156
- Revision Theory, 234ff
- Richard's paradox, 246
- Robb, David, xi
- Rorty, Richard, 92, 100
- Rosenberg, Alexander, 111
- Ross, Alan, 36
- Routley, Richard, 182
- Ruhl, Charles, 168
- Russell, Bertrand, 12, 21, 22, 66, 229, 245
- Russell's paradox, 245
- Ryle, Gilbert, 12, 70

- “S”, xiii  
 Sadock, Jerrold, 11  
 Sainsbury, R.M., 225  
 Saka, 12, 13, 29, 36, 41, 42, 47, 53, 127,  
     129, 180, 191, 206, 242, 253  
 Salmon, Nathan, 21  
 Satisfaction-conditions, 38  
 Saussure, Ferdinand de, 31, 60  
 Scare quotes, 184, 201  
 Scheffler, Israel, 165, 170, 215  
 Schick, Frederic, 155  
 Schiffer, Stephen, 11, 19, 30, 267  
 Schlesinger, George, 80  
 Schmitt, Fred, xii  
 Schopenhauer, Arthur, 103  
 Schutze, Hinrich, 156  
 Scope, 156, 158, 163, 175  
 Searle, John, 11, 27, 29, 36, 71, 182  
 Second-order explanation, 15, 192, 233  
 Segal, Gabriel, 19, 35, 50, 55, 116  
 Self-reference, 220, 244  
 Self-refutation objection, 110  
 Sellars, Wilfrid, 31, 70  
 Semantics-pragmatics distinction, 4, 14, 56,  
     135, 140, 169  
 Seuren, Pieter, 11  
 Sexist epithets, 121ff  
     catalog of, 144  
     slurs, 148  
 Significance Theory, 127ff, 131ff, 220ff  
 Simchen, Ori, 181, 202, 213  
 Simmons, Keith, 221, 229  
 Simon, Horst, 12  
 Simon, Linda, 142  
 Situation semantics, 20  
 Skepticism, 111  
 Slansky, Paul, 207  
 Slurs, 148  
 Smiley, Timothy, 226  
 Soames, Scott, 21, 53  
 Sociolect, black, 145  
 Sociology of knowledge, 15, 104f, 112,  
     117, 164  
 Socio-pragmatics, 143ff  
 Socrates, 4, 19, 41  
 Sommers, Fred, 220  
 Sorensen, Roy, 12, 76, 221, 244  
 Speech acts, 28, 60, 66f, 170, 194  
 Speech-conditions, 59, 136f  
 Sperber, Dan, 27, 138, 197  
 Stainton, Robert, xii, 117, 186, 206  
 Stalnaker, Robert, 50, 91  
 Stanley, Jason, 27, 50  
 Steel, Thomas, Jr, 37  
 Stein, Dieter, 13  
 Stenius, Erik, 38  
 Stenner, A.J., 17, 123, 135  
 Sterelny, Kim, 117  
 Stereotypes, 125ff  
 Stevenson, C., 41  
 Stevenson, Mark, 156  
 Stich, Stephen, 10, 16, 76, 81, 248  
 Stockwell, Robert, 36  
 Stove, David, 110  
 Strawson, P.F., 19, 50, 130, 131  
 Stroll, Avrum, 268  
 Subjectivity, 87, 116, 177, 197, 240; *see*  
     *also* Embodiment; Internalism  
 Subscripts, lexical, 162  
 Success argument, 100  
 Suits, Bernard, 251  
 Swart, Henriette de, 50  
 Sweetser, Eve, 14  
 Szabo, Zoltan, 14, 19  
  
 Tacit knowledge, 42  
 Talmy, Leonard, 33  
 Tarski, Alfred, 117, 179, 180, 229  
 Taylor, Charles, 13  
 Taylor, John, 13, 33  
 Taylor, Kriste, 17, 131ff  
 Tennant, Neil, 23  
 Thematic roles, 11  
 “Theory”, 8  
 Theory-ladenness, 14, 98  
 Todd, Steve, xii, 125  
 Tokens, 57, 159, 169, 177  
 Tomasello, Michael, 33  
 Tone, 135, 150  
 Transcendental argument, 99  
 Translation, 9, 44, 72, 75, 94, 123  
 Traugott, Elizabeth, 14  
 Travis, Charles, 27, 76  
 Truss, Lynn, 190  
 Truth, 19, 92, 110ff, 143, 203, 217ff

- Truth-conditionalism, problems for, *see*  
 Ambiguity; Connotation; Coordination  
 problem; Empirical problems;  
 Hyperintensionality; Identification  
 problem; Ignorance, argument from  
 Intensions; Liar paradox;  
 Misrepresentation; Mood; Motivation  
 problem; Pejoratives; Quotation
- Truth-conditional pragmatics, 27, 56,  
 107, 174
- Truth-conditional semantics, 4, 18–34, 247
- Truth-conditions  
 choric, 49  
 conjunctive, 158, 162  
 delimited, 38, 47  
 disjunctive, 156  
 disquotational, 19, 43, 122, 161  
 duplex, 32  
 epistemic, 35–51, 95  
 explanatory, 54  
 flat/structured, 55  
 general (propositional radicals), 38, 47  
 general (reductionist), 36, 47  
 holistic, 55  
 nominal, 54  
 ontic, 49–54, 95  
 partial, 36, 44, 47  
 realist/verificationist, 22, 55  
 strong/weak, 48, 93  
 wide, 94, 117, 166
- Truth-teller, 242
- T-schema, 19, 217
- Tsohatzidis, Savas, 11, 13, 206
- Turner, Ken, 14
- Two-factor theories, 32, 106, 139
- Tyler, Stephen, 11, 25
- Ulm, Melvin, 230
- Understanding, 45, 62, 109
- Unger, Peter, 41, 116
- Universality argument, 182
- Use/mention analyzed, 198; *see also*  
 Quotation
- Uses, language, 148, 190, 194, 201, 213
- Utterance-conditions, 59, 136f
- Vagueness, 12, 36, 74  
 as ambiguity, 172ff
- Van Deemter, Kees, 156
- Vanderveken, Daniel, 11, 29, 38
- Van Fraassen, Bas, 102, 223, 224
- Vendler, Zeno, 242
- Verbatim assumption, 206
- Verificationism, 22, 250
- Vision, Gerald, 218
- Wagner, Steven, xii, 16
- Warren, R.M., 14
- Warren, R.P., 14
- Weinreich, Uriel, 165
- Weir, Alan, 234
- Wertheimer, Roger, xii, 187
- Wide content, 94, 117, 166
- Wierzbicka, Anna, 26, 157
- Wiese, Heike, 12
- Wilkins, Wendy, 11
- Williamson, Timothy, 12
- Wilson, Deirdre, 27, 138, 197
- Wilson, Robert, 16
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig, 13, 50, 182, 220,  
 250, 251, 252
- Woods, John, 225
- Wright, Crispin, 23
- Wright, Susan, 13
- Yablo, Stephen, 221
- Yaqub, Aladdin, 235
- Yasuda, Seiichiro, xii
- Yourgrau, Palle, 12
- Zwicky, Arnold, 11