EDITORIAL PREFACE

This is the second volume on the philosophical relevance of the concept of meaning. Several issues that did not receive any attention in the preceeding volume, are dealt with here. Nevertheless, the reader should not expect to receive a complete overview of the problem in these two volumes. Neither shall I try to complete the picture in this introduction. Indeed, an overview of the literature would be too dependent on the views of the author and hence would risk to do injustice to the complexity of the issues involved in several contributions to the problems of meaning. A survey of basic problems would even be worse in this respect. And furthermore, an attempt to present a taxonomy of possibly fruitful approaches to the problem would be too daring an enterprise for the time being. For these reasons I want to make it absolutely clear that the following paragraphs, which contain a classification of the present contributions, are incomplete and perhaps even somewhat arbitrary with respect to the problem. They are merely the result of reading the present contributions and they are written by someone who is far from uncommitted to specific standpoints.

Looking over the contributions, it becomes readily clear that they may be classified in several ways, one of them related to the specific problem the author wants to tackle within the field of meaning theory. I shall try to give an overview of the contributions to the two volumes from this point of view. The reader will remember that I have argued in the introduction to the preceding volume that most theories of meaning are only partial. A complete such theory should at least be able to lead to a solution of all problems dealt with in the present two volumes.

A first kind of contributions aims explicitly at defining the meaning of certain terms. Typically this may only be done with respect to terms that one labels usually as logical or logical mathematical. The fact that logical systems, be they syntactical or semantical in nature, are recognised by all or almost all parties in the debate as defining at least in some respect the meaning of logical

terms, is in itself worth to be noted. This means, first of all, that logical mathematical terms have a special status and, next, that it follows from this special status that one might contribute to the study of their meaning by offering a theory, e.g. an axiomatic system, which seems to make sense all by itself, even if it is not embedded in a general theory of meaning dealing with all terms (or linguistic entities). There are no doubt several defensible ways in which the special status of logical mathematical terms might be accounted for, but any theory of meaning should be able to account for this status.

There seem to be at least two possible ways in which one might contribute to the definition of the meaning of logical terms by means of a logical system. One of these ways consists in presenting a logical system (in the widest sense) that defines the set of all sentences, respectively formulas, that are taken to be "true by virtue of the meaning of the logical terms considered". The contribution of Niels Egmont Christensen is an example of an attempt towards the articulation of such a formal system. It goes without saying that Christensen is not just trying to articulate any formal system, a task which would be all to easy to accomplish. What he is trying to do is to articulate a formal system that defines the meaning of a set of connectives in an exact way, starting from a vague indication of this meaning, viz. from a semantic criterion. In other words Christensen is concerned with the search for an explication. But in a sense Christensen is doing more than just searching for an explication. He is convinced that he is on the way of defining a set of logical connectives that are not affected by the paradoxes of the connectives of the classical two-valued propositional calculus, viz. of material implication. And it is obvious that this conviction plays a role in those cases where the sole application of the semantic criterion does not help him out.

In a sense Robert Kraut (preceding volume) works just the opposite way around. He tries to clarify the meaning of modal notions by clarifying their semantics in terms of an intuitively appealing interpretation. At first sight this might sound paradoxical. Such notions as meaning and interpretation are usually considered as semantical in nature; a semantics provides an interpretation for and assigns "possible meanings" to syntactic entities. Yet most people will hold that they understand better the semantics of PC and the meaning of the connectives of PC if they are told that the "truth-values" 1 and 0 may be interpreted as "true" and "false". Given such an "interpretation" the semantical clauses determining the values assigned to complex formulas become "better

understood". Analogously, most people will hold that they understand better the Kripke style semantics for S.5 if they are told that the set W may be considered a set of possible worlds, which are complete and consistent with respect to S.5 formulas. However, it must be clear that the latter kind of interpretation links semantical entities, which are perfectly unambiguous and formally precise things, to more intuitive notions such as "truth" (in the intuitive sense, not of course in the semantic sense) and "possible world", which are by all means more obscure than the semantical entities themselves. This kind of interpretation, of the exact in terms of the obscure, might perhaps be best described as the converse of an explication : given a theory about perfectly clear notions (viz. the semantics), one tries to find a set of more obscure intuitive notions for which the notions of the theory might be considered an explicatum. I am far from claiming that the semantics might be considered a complete explication of the intuitive notions. I would rather say, and this view is gaining more and more adherents these days, that a semantical theory might be considered a partial ontological theory, or perhaps a generalized and rather abstract ontological theory. Anyway, if it makes sense to search for the kind of interpretation that Kraut presents, then this very fact constitutes an argument, along with other ones to be sure, in favor of the view that there is more to be said about the meaning of logical terms than to define them, explicitly or implicitly, by means of a logical system.

A second kind of contributions that I would like to introduce here is similar to the first kind in that the contributions are still centering on the meaning of certain linguistic expressions. However, it is not tried in these contributions to define the meaning of certain linguistic entities but only to describe rather general relations that hold between the linguistic entities under consideration and other entities, be it entities of the same language, entities of another language, or extra-linguistic entities. Of course contributions of this second kind might be seen as preparations to contributions of the first kind, but only in case they concern logical terms or in case they concern the logical structure of certain semi-logical or even non-logical terms (such as, e.g., certain modalities). Most contributions of the second kind will obviously not fall under this extreme case, and indeed no article from the present two volumes does. However, R.M. Martin's article comes pretty close to it. Martin presupposes that a sufficiently rich underlying logic is given and proposes a translation of certain English sentences into a semi-formalised language which has the structure of the aforementioned logic. In this way he hopes to clarify the subjects of

tense, aspect and modality. Martin does not offer a formal system which defines the meaning of all logical terms occurring in the underlying logic. Nevertheless, it is clear what a general theory of meaning should look like according to his conviction, and it is also clear where his contribution must be placed within the program for the elaboration of this general theory of meaning, viz. as a step from the natural language, English in his case, towards the formal language. In a sense he works down from the top (natural language), whereas most logicians usually work up from the bottom (formal system), and the efforts of neither party do seem to be meaningful unless they will once reach one another. In the mean time "linguistic" theories will lack precision, whereas "logical" theories will lack richness.

Still under the same heading we may classify contributions that contain an attempt to articulate either specifications of the meanings (in the widest sense, not distinguishing e.g. between "sense" and "reference") of the expressions under consideration, or else the relation between the expressions and other expressions of the same language. In the latter case the meaning of expressions is elucidated in an indirect way, by means of the study of relations between expressions—relations that are considered to hold, at least on the common view, by virtue of relations between the meanings of the expressions. To consider just a simple example, the meaning of certain expressions might be defined as a function of the meaning of definite parts of them. (The reader will remember Quine's grave warnings against this common view and against the introduction of any meanings at all.) William Ulrich's paper (preceding volume) is a typical example of a contribution concerning the specification of the entities which are the meanings of the expressions studied. He argues essentially that the meanings of the nominalizations of illocutionary verbs are entities that are neatly distinct from the illocutionary acts themselves and from the results of these acts. Eduardo Rabossi on the other hand discusses the meanings of certain expressions as well as the relation between these expressions and certain related ones. His paper deals with Austin's position on explicit performatives and with the defense of this position against several attacks. He not only offers arguments related to the view that the meanings (in the wide sense) of performatives are couples of a "meaning" in the narrow sense and a "force", he also comments on the relation that holds between the meaning of a performative on the one hand and of the proposition, or statement, that follows the act description in explicit performatives on the other hand.

A third kind of contributions studies the relation of certain

(partial) theories of meaning and certain other theories. Indeed, a theory of meaning has not only to be judged with respect to certain linguistic and logical requirements. The meaning of linguistic entities is in an obvious way essential for any theory. *A fortiori* a theory of meaning is essential to those philosophical disciplines that are in one way or another meta-disciplines with respect to certain theories : epistemology, philosophy of science, ethics, and so on. All these disciplines are not only expressed themselves by means of linguistic entities, they are also about theories expressed by means of linguistic entities. By this I do not mean that they study such theories in isolation or qua systems of linguistic entities. To the contrary, they study such theories together with and in relation to certain facts and certain types of human behaviour, and it is precisely because they study theories in this relation that the theory of meaning is essential to them. It would be impossible, e.g., to articulate a realistic and philosophically acceptable theory about the methodology of physics without dealing with the meaning of the entities of the language of physics and without dealing with the relation between these entities, the facts that physics purports to describe and certain activities of physicists. In this sense the theory of meaning is a preliminary to the understanding of other theories and their methodologies. Unfortunately, it would be quite irrealistic to try to articulate a theory of meaning without taking account of the problems it has to solve with respect to this very understanding of other theories and their methodologies. Important contributions to the theory of meaning originated in connection with the solution of problems not belonging to the field of meaning (remember as well Plato as Frege) and an attempt to construct a theory of meaning by relying on certain logical or linguistic facts or, even worse, on logical or linguistic intuitions, would almost certainly be bound to fail.

Fernand Vandamme discusses Pierce's view on meaning with respect to descriptive semantics. He considers several modifications to Pierce's theory, especially those resulting from the introduction of a logic of action, and points to the fruitfulness of the theory, emended along these lines, in connection with understanding and heuristics in the theory of language and communication. Both Scott A. Kleiner (preceding volume) and Richard Arthur (preceding volume) discuss theories of meaning in connection with such problems as theory change, the possibility of communication between scientists subscribing to different theories, the incommensurability of theories, and the like. Kleiner defends mainly the Grice-Schiffer approach to meaning in this connection, whereas Arthur defends the introduction of a notion of reference (as distinct

from denotation).

The contributions of the fourth kind are discussions of certain theses advanced within theories of meaning. Their importance lies in the fact that they are concerned with lasting controversies around these theses. Hence they take account of a number of arguments in favor or against certain them, and either they lead to a rejection or else they contain attempts to correct the thesis under discussion or to reformulate it in such a way that it escapes from certain criticism. In this sense certain contributions fulfil the constant need of refining the existing more or less comprehensive theories of meaning with respect to new results in the field, whereas others invoke the reader either to reject or else to refine further the theses discussed. The value of such a refinement depends on the extent to which it results in a bolder, more comprehensive and more useful (partial) theory of meaning, and perhaps also on the extent in which this theory will lead to relevant arguments for the evaluation of competitors; the value of a rejection depends on the extent to which it shows the theory to be irrepairable and prevents the adherents of the theory to reformulate it in such a way that it escapes the rejection.

An example of such a refinement is Paul Gochet's article on Quine's views on meaning. Gochet considers Quine's well known theses and shows that they are not inconsistent if taken together, and that neither of them is trivial with respect to the other ones. In order to do so he offers more sophisticated and more precise formulations of certain of these theses (e.g. he holds that there is continuity between language and theory from a semantic point of view, whereas there is discontinuity between them from a syntactic point of view — a specification that enables Gochet to save Quine from inconsistency). Furthermore, he clarifies the significance of several theses considerably by comparing the relevant texts from Quine's papers and by pointing out their consequences; he also introduces several supplementary theses which lie outside the strict domain of meaning theory but which undermine objections against Quine's views on meaning (e.g. the distinction between positive metaphysics and transcendental metaphysics).

Part of the contribution by Eduardo Rabossi belongs also to this fourth kind of contributions, as may be seen from the comments I made on it earlier. A still more typical example of a refinement of a theory — or rather of a major thesis of a theory — is Charles Castonguay's article on Kant's analytic-synthetic distinction (preceding volume). Castonguay rejects Hintikka's attempt to make sense of the debated notion of the synthetic *a priori*, offers a dynamic interpretation of the distinction between analytic and

synthetic in mathematics, and presents a number of arguments in order to show that the distinction, thus interpreted, is both well-defined and useful. Herbert Hochberg's contribution (preceding volume) on the other hand is on the destructive side. He tries to show the correctness of Russell's attack on the Fregean distinction between *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*. If he is correct, this widely accepted and applied distinction has to be given up.

The contributions of the fifth kind are concerned with a much more general problem than those of the preceding kinds, viz. with the construction of a general semantics. It goes without saying that the formulation of a semantics for a set of languages, especially if natural languages are taken to be members of this set, is a much more comprehensive undertaking than what any of the aforementioned articles is intended to result at, be it only because an adequate such theory should incorporate or be able to explain those results, insofar as correct, of contributions of the aforementioned kinds that are relevant to semantics. Some philosophers and linguists seem even to be convinced that a general semantics, together with its meta-theory, should be able to provide an answer to any problem concerning meaning. If they are right, then an attempt to construct a general semantics would be the privileged way towards unification in the field of meaning.

Henry Hiż (preceding volume) presents some principles which he considers basic with respect to the semantics of natural language. Asa Kasher (preceding volume) deals with the more general problem of the adequacy of semantic theories for natural languages, and from his discussion he derives tentative conclusions for the ongoing debate between adherents of Montague's intensional frameworks and adherents of Chomsky's approach. Richard Routley defends the position that a general theory of meaning is required, and that there are convincing arguments in favor of the view that the construction of a universal semantics is the best way to reach such a general theory of meaning. In this connection he discusses extensively several views on meaning and reference. Furthermore, he sketches a general semantic theory, using work done by Kemeny and by himself as a basis, and gives a detailed account of several issues with respect to this theory.

The reader will have noted that a wide variety of approaches to meaning problems are advocated, and that these approaches aim at an as wide variety of theories of meaning. Only in some cases the different approaches converge towards the same problem, as is the case for the aforementioned articles by Kleiner and Arthur. The intrinsic plausibility of the different approaches with respect to the

solution of the problems tackled by them supports the view that a general theory of meaning should be complex enough to incorporate large parts of what are now considered opposed theories. One may only hope that the theory of meaning will ultimately profit from the present pluralism and that the methodological requirement of unification, which is — in too injust a way in my opinion — attacked by a number of "modernists", will lead to an elaborated, muti-leveled, and mature theory of meaning that is apt not only to face but also to answer the multitude of questions in the field.

Diderik Batens