An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language

This book is a critical introduction to the central issues of the philosophy of language. Each chapter focuses on one or two texts that have had a seminal influence on work in the subject, and uses these as a way of approaching both the central topics and the various traditions of dealing with them. Texts include classic writings by Frege, Russell, Kripke, Quine, Davidson, Austin, Grice, and Wittgenstein. Theoretical jargon is kept to a minimum and is fully explained whenever it is introduced. The range of topics covered includes sense and reference, definite descriptions, proper names, natural-kind terms, de re and de dicto necessity, propositional attitudes, truth-theoretical approaches to meaning, radical interpretation, indeterminacy of translation, speech acts, intentional theories of meaning, and scepticism about meaning. The book will be invaluable to students and to all readers who are interested in the nature of linguistic meaning.

Michael Morris is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Sussex. He is author of The Good and the True (1992) and numerous articles.
An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language

MICHAEL MORRIS
University of Sussex
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acknowledgements</th>
<th>page ix</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 1 Locke and the nature of language          5

1.1 Introduction                                5
1.2 What Locke says                             5
1.3 Meaning and signification                   9
1.4 Problems about communication                10
1.5 Words and sentences                         14
1.6 Locke’s less disputed assumptions           18

### 2 Frege on Sense and reference               21

2.1 Introduction                                21
2.2 Psychologism and the Context Principle       22
2.3 Frege and logic                             26
2.4 Frege’s mature system (i): reference        28
2.5 Frege’s mature system (ii): Sense            32
2.6 Two further uses of the notion of Sense      36
2.7 Questions about Sense                        40
2.8 Sense and the Basic Worry                   47

### 3 Russell on definite descriptions           49

3.1 Introduction                                49
3.2 The problems                                50
3.3 Russell’s solution in outline               53
3.4 Russell’s solution in detail                 55
3.5 Strawson on definite descriptions           61
3.6 Donnellan on referential and attributive uses of descriptions 63
3.7 Russellian defences 66
3.8 Russell beyond descriptions 70

4 Kripke on proper names 74
4.1 Introduction 74
4.2 Kripke’s target 76
4.3 Kripke’s objections (i): simple considerations 78
4.4 Kripke’s objections (ii): epistemic and modal considerations 80
4.5 Defences of the description theory 85
4.6 Sense and direct reference 90
4.7 Conclusion 92

5 Natural-kind terms 94
5.1 Introduction 94
5.2 A Lockean view of natural-kind terms: the individualist version 96
5.3 A Lockean view without individualism 102
5.4 How can there be Kripke–Putnam natural-kind terms? 105
5.5 How can natural-kind terms be rigid designators? 108

6 Quine on de re and de dicto modality 113
6.1 Introduction 113
6.2 Quine’s three grades of modal involvement 114
6.3 Referential opacity and Leibniz’s law 118
6.4 Referential opacity and the three grades 121
6.5 Quine’s logical problem with de re modality 126
6.6 Quine’s metaphysical worries about de re modality 130

7 Reference and propositional attitudes 134
7.1 Introduction 134
7.2 Quine’s problem 135
7.3 Quine’s proposed solution 138
7.4 Perry and the essential indexical 145
7.5 The problems for Quine’s solution 147
7.6 Consequences 150

8 The semantics of propositional attitudes 152
8.1 Introduction 152
8.2 Kripke, names, necessity and propositional attitudes 153
### Contents

8.3  Kripke’s Pierre 155
8.4  Referential solutions to the puzzle 158
8.5  A Fregean response 163
8.6  Davidson’s proposal 166
8.7  Can Davidson’s proposal solve Kripke’s puzzle? 169

9  Davidson on truth and meaning 173
9.1  Introduction 173
9.2  Meanings as entities 175
9.3  Tarski’s ‘definition’ of truth 179
9.4  Davidson’s use of Tarski 183
9.5  The obvious objections to Davidson’s proposal 187
9.6  Truth and the possibility of general semantics 189
9.7  One final worry 191

10  Quine and Davidson on translation and interpretation 194
10.1  Introduction 194
10.2  Quine and radical translation 195
10.3  Davidson and radical interpretation 198
10.4  Statements of meaning and propositional attitudes 202
10.5  Theories of meaning and speakers’ knowledge 205
10.6  How fundamental is radical interpretation? 210

11  Quine on the indeterminacy of translation 214
11.1  Introduction 214
11.2  ‘Two dogmas of empiricism’ 215
11.3  Indeterminacy and inscrutability 219
11.4  Resisting Quine on indeterminacy: some simple ways 228

12  Austin on speech acts 231
12.1  Introduction 231
12.2  Performative utterances 232
12.3  Towards a general theory of speech acts 234
12.4  Truth and performatives 239
12.5  Issues for a theory of speech acts 242

13  Grice on meaning 248
13.1  Introduction 248
13.2  Grice’s overall strategy 249
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>Sympathetic objections to Grice's account of</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>speaker-meaning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>Sympathetic objections to Grice's account of</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>expression-meaning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>An unsympathetic objection to Grice's account of</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>expression-meaning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>An unsympathetic objection to Grice's account of</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>speaker-meaning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>After Grice</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Kripke on the rule-following paradox</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>The sceptical challenge</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>The 'sceptical solution'</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>A community-based response</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>Can dispositionalism be defended?</td>
<td>284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>Anti-reductionism and radical interpretation</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Wittgenstein on the Augustinian picture</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>The Augustinian picture</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>The Anti-Metaphysical interpretation</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>The Quasi-Kantian interpretation</td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>Worries about these Wittgensteinian views</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Glossary 312

Works cited 316

Index 323
Acknowledgements

A number of people have read and commented on drafts of individual chapters of this book: Michael Ireland, Marie McGinn, Adrian Moore, Murali Ramachandran, David Smith. I am very grateful to them. I am also particularly grateful to an anonymous reader, who read the whole book in draft and produced a large number of detailed and helpful comments and suggestions. Finally, I would like to thank Hilary Gaskin, the philosophy editor at Cambridge University Press, for her supportive guidance through the various stages of writing the book.