

## INTRODUCTION

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In his *Foundation of the Theory of Signs* (1938) Charles Morris divided semiotic investigation into three areas: syntactics, semantics and pragmatics. Syntactics deals with formal relations between signs in abstraction from their signification and their interpreters. Semantics, in turn, examines the relations between signs and their referents independently of the way signs are used. The latter belongs to the province of pragmatics, which is the study of the “relation of signs to their interpreters” or, in other words, the study of language use. In short, according to Charles Morris, all semiotic disciplines are concerned with their respective aspects of signs and, what is important, these aspects can be studied separately. In particular, we should treat semantic features of signs as something independent of their pragmatic properties. Following this methodological principle many prominent thinkers put pragmatic investigations aside and focussed on semantics, which for many years took pride of place in the modern philosophy of language.

In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the adequacy of Morrisian methodology was seriously undermined and, as a result, semantics was dethroned by pragmatics. We can even speak of a kind of pragmatic turn in modern philosophy of language. This turn has its origins, first of all, in the later philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein. In his *Philosophical Investigations* he coined a slogan “the meaning of a word is its use in the language”, giving rise to the development of various kinds of *use theories of meaning*. Roughly speaking, the main idea behind the theories in question is that our words mean what they do by virtue of the way we use them. Therefore, contrary to Morrisian methodology, while examining the semantic properties of signs we should allow for their pragmatic features. Another important source of motivation behind the

pragmatic turn is Charles S. Peirce's semiotics. According to this view in every sign we can distinguish three aspects, namely its bearer, referent and interpretant. They constitute a triad, which means that they do not exist independently and, therefore, cannot be examined separately.

The pragmatic turn means, first of all, that pragmatics takes pride of place in modern philosophy of language. It should be noted, however, that it also has a bearing on other branches of philosophy. In modern epistemology, for example, there is a tendency to construct theories of central predicates and operators of the so-called epistemic talk – namely such expressions as “know”, “true”, “justified” – with the help of tools developed in pragmatics. The papers collected in this issue deal with this two aspects of the pragmatic turn. The volume begins with three papers devoted to some basic issues in general pragmatics. Next, there are two papers which offer theories of knowledge and truth that result from adopting a pragmatic approach to epistemic talk.

In *Commitments and Speech Acts* Robert M. Harnish offers an insight into one of the most fundamental discussions within speech act theory, namely the discussion on the nature of illocutionary communication. He starts with the question of what makes uttering a sentence in a context the performance of an illocutionary act. In seeking an answer we can adopt one of two competing viewpoints. According to the so-called *Gricean* approach, illocutionary acts can be defined in terms of expressing complex intentional states. Proponents of the more or less *Austinian* theories, on the other hand, do not assign such a central role to the idea of expressing an attitude. They insist, instead, on accounting for illocutionary communication in terms of rules and conventions that are in force in the community. Robert M. Harnish claims that the Gricean approach provides a better explanation of our communicative practice. In order to justify this claim he points out, firstly, that adopting the Gricean approach we are in a position to solve some traditional puzzles of speech act theory, whereas the Austinian theories fail to account for them. For example, the Gricean conception defines a clear distinction between illocutionary and perlocutionary acts and offers a criterion for successful illocutionary communication. It also provides a taxonomy of illocutionary acts in terms of kinds of intentional states expressed and, therefore, enables a naturalistic reduction of pragmatics to propositional attitude psychology. Secondly, Robert M. Harnish concentrates on William Alston's conception – an influential

account developed within the *Austinian* tradition – whose central idea is that in performing a given illocutionary act the speaker takes an appropriate kind of normative stance towards his or her utterances. Robert M. Harnish argues that the description of a given illocutionary act as an act of taking a normative stance in uttering something is at most an alternative – and in a sense an equivalent – way of saying that it is the act of expressing the belief that *p*. Therefore, the conception of speaking as taking a normative stance towards an utterance does not seem to offer a deeper insight into the nature of illocutionary communication.

Nevertheless, the idea of explaining linguistic communication in terms of taking a normative stance or attitude is very popular. Jaroslav Peregrin in his *Brandom and Davidson: what do we need to account for thinking and agency?* offers an examination of *normative pragmatics*. According to this view – which was developed by Bob Brandom – what we need in order to account for mind-having and language-having is the normative mode of speech. In other words, Bob Brandom adopts a kind of conceptual dualism, namely the view that an adequate explanation of our mental and linguistic activity requires an application of a special language that is not translatable into the language of physics. Another philosopher who shares such a dualistic viewpoint is Donald Davidson. He claims, nevertheless, that what we need in order to account for mind-having is not a specific mode of speech, but one specific concept, namely the concept of truth. Jaroslav Peregrin argues that the discrepancy between these two forms of conceptual dualism is not so big as it would initially seem. First of all, truth is a normative concept. In other words, in taking an utterance to be true we categorize it as correct, which means taking a normative attitude towards the utterance. It remains to be examined, however, whether the same conception of normativity can be subscribed to both Bob Brandom and Donald Davidson or, more accurately, to what extent their views on linguistic norms can be likened to each other. It should also be kept in mind that according to Bob Brandom – who follows Wilfried Sellars in this respect – truth is a matter of correct assertability, whereas Donald Davidson's central claim is that truth is irreducible. Taking into account such and similar interpretation problems Jaroslav Peregrin casts an interesting light on the virtues and limitations of the normative approach to pragmatics.

In their *Pragmatist Pragmatics: The functional context of utterances* John Collier and Konrad Talmont-Kamiński claim that the

formal approach to pragmatics is inadequate and has to be replaced with what they call functional pragmatics. In order to justify their view they argue that it is the latter, not the former, that provides a complete account of how context affects the meaning of utterances. The point is, the authors claim, that formal considerations underdetermine the meaning of utterances. What explains the failure of formal pragmatics, they suggest, is the fact that it presupposes an inadequate view of the function of language. It assumes, namely, that the main role of utterances consists in representing, whereas, the authors claim, the primary function of linguistic acts is to convey information about distinctions in the world. Representing is an important, though secondary and derived function of speech. Moreover, developing some ideas put forward by Jon Barwise and John Perry in their situation semantics, John Collier and Konrad Talmont-Kamiński offer their own view on linguistic communication. Functional pragmatics – as they call it – rests on the previously mentioned idea concerning the primary function of language as well as on Charles S. Peirce's semiotic theory, according to which every sign is a triad. From the resulting point of view an utterance – whose meaning is under scrutiny – should be conceived as an aspect of the relevant interpretative situation. The latter, in turn, has to be regarded as carrying information about the situation that is represented by the utterance under consideration. It turns out, therefore, that inadequacies of both formal pragmatics and situation semantics stem from the same fallacy, which consists in regarding semiosis as a dyadic, not triadic relation. Formal pragmatics, the authors claim, ignores the role of the total interpretative context, whereas situation semantics underappreciates the theoretical reasons for distinguishing an utterance as an important aspect of the total context.

The two next papers – Adam Grobler's *Law, Truth and Presupposition* and my *Truth and Conversation* – offer their respective insights into the nature of knowledge and truth that result from adopting a pragmatic approach to epistemic talk.

Adam Grobler starts with the observation that although we find the scientific theories of the past inadequate, nevertheless we call them knowledge. In order to account for this specific use of the concept of knowledge we have to revise its tripartite definition by abandoning the truth requirement as too demanding. Adam Grobler suggests that we should replace it with the condition that a known proposition has to be

not false in order to allow for the existence of the so-called truth-value gaps. As a result, we are entitled to count outdated scientific theories as knowledge despite their being untrue and, what is important, to distinguish them from false beliefs. It is the logic of presuppositions that explains the nature of truth-value gaps: a proposition is neither true nor false if the proposition it presupposes is false. A scientific theory of the past, therefore, is true relative to its presuppositions. If the latter turn out to be false, the theory in question, despite its being untrue, can still be called knowledge. Adam Grobler demonstrates a few further applications of the notion of presupposition to the questions raised in epistemology and philosophy of science. The logic of presupposition allows us to cast a new light on the brain-in-a-vat argument as well as on the issues of the growth of science, idealization and abstraction.

In my *Truth and Conversation* I develop an argument against the deflationary conception of truth. According to the conception in question what constitutes the meaning of the truth predicate is the conversational validity of instances of the equivalence schema: “It is true that *S* if and only if *S*”. In other words, the proponent of the deflationary conception claims, the truth predicate means what it does by virtue of the fact that every competent speaker is ready to accept the sentence of the form “It is true that *S*” provided he has just accepted the sentence “*S*”, and *vice versa*. I claim that the observed conversational validity of the instances of the equivalence schema can be explained away as the result of certain conversational implicatures generated by the use of the truth predicate as well as any act of making a statement. In short, being subject to a pragmatic explanation, the conversational validity under consideration cannot be regarded as a semantic and definitional property of the truth predicate.

From December 2001 till December 2004, the Science, Innovation and Media Department of the Ministry of the Flemish Community (Belgium) and the State Committee for Scientific Research of the Republic of Poland funded a cooperation project (Bilateral Scientific and Technological Cooperation Project BIL01/80) between two Flemish and two Polish research centres. The Flemish partners were the Centre for Logic and Philosophy of Science of Ghent University and the Centre for Logic and Philosophy of Science of the Free University of Brussels. The Polish partners were the Chair of Logic and Philosophy of Science of the

University of Zielona Góra and the Group of Logic and Cognitive Science of Nicolaus Copernicus University (Toruń).

The purpose of the project was the logical and historical analysis of some issues in the philosophy of science (such as: causation, induction, theory building, etc.) and epistemology (such as: ampliative reasoning, the presuppositions and implicatures of assertions, problem solving, the issue of how questions arise, etc.). In order to achieve their aims, the partners in the cooperation project organised four workshops: VlaPoLo6 (*The Dynamics of Reasoning in the Sciences: Adaptive and Interrogative Perspectives*, Ghent, 17-19 October 2002), VlaPoLo7 (*Problem Solving in the Sciences: Adaptive and Interrogative Perspectives*, Brussels, 8-10 May 2003), VlaPoLo8 (*Flemish-Polish Workshop on Adaptive and Eerotetic Logics and their Application to the Philosophy of Science*, Zielona Góra, 20-22 November 2003) and VlaPoLo9 (*Patterns of Scientific Reasoning: Adaptive and Interrogative Perspectives*, Ghent, 6-8 May 2004). Two of the articles in this volume (Adam Grobler's and mine) result from papers presented at one of these workshops.

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