Meaning I

Philosophical Logic

Lecture 3: Meaning

1. Meaning What is meaning? A foundational theory of meaning: In virtue of what does a particular sentence have the meaning or meanings it has?

2. Speakers and sentences We can distinguish between what *linguistic expressions* (sentences, phrases, words) mean, and what *speakers* mean by uttering linguistic expressions. ('Sentence meaning' vs 'Speaker meaning')

3. Explanatory priority What is the relation between sentence meaning and speaker meaning? Some say: sentence meaning explains speaker meaning. Others: speaker meaning explains sentence meaning. Alternatives?

4. Natural and non-natural meaning Grice distinguishes between 'natural' and 'nonnatural' meaning, and offers 5 criteria to distinguish them. (Can we also conceive the distinction as being between non-communicative and communicative meaning?)

5. Accounting for non-natural meaning Two steps: (i) we can understand speaker meaning in terms of speaker intention; (ii) we can understand sentence meaning in terms of speaker meaning. (Some call this kind of analysis 'mentalism' about meaning.)

Step (i):

1. Theresa intends her utterance of "There will be a third runway." to induce in Boris the belief that there will be a third runway.
2. Theresa intends Boris to recognise the intention behind her utterance of "There will be a third runway."
3. Boris' recognition of Theresa's intention plays a part in the explanation of why Boris forms the belief that there will be a third runway.

6. Problems for this theory of meaning Searle's counterexample: "Kennst du das Land, wo die Zitronen blühen?". Searle's solution: distinguish *perlocutionary* and *illocutionary* effects, and require sensitivity to rules or convention. (J. Searle, "What is a Speech-Act?" in Max Black (ed.), *Philosophy in America*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1965, pp. 221—239.)