~~Language~~

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“no entity without identity”

— Quine

0.0 Introduction.

A perennial problem of twentieth century philosophy, linguistics, semiotics, and psychology (as well as other fields) has been the distinction between language ('langue') and speech ('parole'). This distinction is very similar, if not identical, to the distinction between semantics and pragmatics. Or still closer, we may distinguish between the entire phonetics—phonemics—morphology—syntagmatics—syntax—semantics axis, and pragmatics. A distinction of this sort arises, not only with respect to language and speech, but to any semiotic system. It is the difference between an abstract system of oppositional sign elements, and the application of this system by actual concrete beings, notably persons. There are, of course, semiotic systems other than those operated (and operated on) by persons; particularly those studied by zoosemiotics, cybernetics, information theory, and computer science. In the latter three of the fields which we have mentioned there is an obvious, and justified, program/implementation split, corresponding to the langue/parole distinction. In all of these fields the object studied is an artifact, and one created for specific purposes. Hence, whenever there is a divergence between program and its implementation, our highest level classification of this event must be “(machine) error”.

While this “error” classification is most appropriate for artificial systems, we should be wary of applying it too quickly to natural systems: the emotive and communicative systems of animals, natural (physical) systems when viewed as informational, and most importantly, the objects of the human sciences. With the general academic denouncement of normative ('prescriptive') grammars, in favor of descriptive ones, linguistics can seem to have freed itself of an improper reliance on the “error” classification. However, linguistics — even descriptive — has with philosophical collusion maintained an essentially normative and teleological[1] conception of persons qua speaking beings. This tendency, though far from universal, arises over and over again in many guises, and in many intellectual traditions. In this paper we shall try to examine several of the normative systems which would have one favor language over speaking, and semantics over pragmatics. As we have just indicated, our focus shall be primarily on natural languages, and the various fields which concern themselves with natural languages. In the end we shall try to present a program for study of natural “languages”, for philosophers and others, which is fully materialist and optimally nominalist; which favors speech over language, and pragmatics over the semantics axis.

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[1] We use 'teleological' and its cognates in a somewhat nonstandard sense. Where the normal use might be only to describe systems which through internal laws tend towards some ideal state or equilibrium, we use a somewhat broader, though, we believe cohesive sense. We shall use 'teleological' to describe any system or object which either tends towards an ideal state, or toward an ideal, and perhaps externally defined, regularity in behavior. Further, we shall allow that this tendency might be the consequence, not only of internal laws, but of the structure in which the object is placed. This applies concretely to our interest by assuming the object of interest to be persons, whose behavior may tend toward e.g. the production of syntactical speech due to their position in the structure of society. We shall argue that in this sense, persons, in Saussure's schema, are teleologically directed toward langue. This should also probably be the case of Chomsky's 'competence', though we shall not specifically deal with this herein.

1.0 Saussure.

The rift between language and speech in modern linguistics originates with Ferdinand de Saussure. This is not to say that no such rift exists prior to Saussure. It does exist, in linguistics with Wilhelm von Humboldt; in philosophy with almost everyone, starting with Plato. But it is Saussure who first brought the fully developed conception of a language/speech split to scientific linguistics. Saussure has also had an unquestionably great influence on structuralist thinking in all of the human sciences. It is largely because of this influence that these sciences tend towards an idealist teleology whenever they examine persons qua speaking beings. Hence we shall start our examination with an analysis of Saussure's conceptions, which are still enormously compelling and useful today — even to those trying to pursue a materialist or pragmaticist[2] program.

The idealism and teleology which we attribute to Saussure are tendencies which he explicitly denies, at least in the form we attribute them. Hence, we shall have to try to draw out some consequences of Saussure's thinking which are not made explicit. This is largely a matter of making clear the ontological status of langue, langage, and parole; at the same time we must have a critical eye towards Saussure's claims about the ontological (and epistemic) status of his entities. However, we shall first try to explain Saussure's system of thought in a neutral manner.

1.0.1 Terminology.

To embark on an exposition of Saussure's thought, we must first explain the sense of three terms: 'langage', 'langue', and 'parole'. The latter two of these, in particular, are crucial to Saussure's thought. The most general of these terms, 'langage', is meant to embrace all elements of human speaking. These elements include the physiological construction and reception of sounds by persons' vocal and aural apparati; the physical facts about transmission of sounds or other media through which language can be carried; and the psychological and sociological mechanisms through which understanding can occur. It is the last of these categories which includes 'langue', i.e. 'language'. Saussure's first remarks about langue are essentially to this effect. He says,

> “[Langue] is both a social product of the faculty of speech and a collection of necessary conventions that have been adopted by a social body to permit individuals to exercise that faculty (p.9).”

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[2] We use 'pragmaticist' here not in reference to the term which Pierce invented to distinguish his philosophy from James' pragmatism, but in the sense found in linguistics. Pragmaticism in linguistics is, roughly, the position that the meaning and force of utterances are to be explicated in terms of the pragmatic situation of utterance, not by a semantic theory of language.

This merely points to the social nature of langue, we have not yet provided a rigorous definition of it. Let us now try to do so. Langue, as Saussure conceives it, is the arbitrary[3] matching up of "sound--images" with "concepts".

Although, langue is socially determined, it is essentially a psychological entity. Saussure says, "If we could embrace the sum of word-images stored in the minds of all individuals, we could identify the social bond that constitutes language [i.e. langue] (p.13)." We are to understand that 'sound-image', as Saussure uses it, stands for an exclusively psychological object, not a physical sound. Saussure presupposes some sort of representational theory of mind, in order that sound-images are conceived as some actual entities in the brain. This is not, however, really crucial. If we preferred to give some functional explanation of the mind as a system of virtual representation, this could easily be accommodated to the Saussurian conception of language.[4] For Saussure, the primary fact about langue is its arbitrariness. That is, no logical or natural connection exists between the particular sound-images and concepts in correspondence. These correspondences, although contained in the mind of each speaker, are determined by social convention.

Parole is the "executive side (p.13)" of langage, that is, the individual and accidental in human speech. Parole may be divided into two parts:

> "(1) the combination by which the speaker uses the language code for expressing his [sic] own thought; and (2) the psychophysical mechanism that allows him to exteriorize those combinations (p.14)."

By 'combinations' Saussure means the links between certain sound-images and concepts which define a language [langue]. Saussure is only concerned here with the semantic links in language. We shall not try to extend this to the syntactic combinations in language, although these should probably play a closely analogous role to those played by semantic links. We can then see already that Saussure's distinctions suppose a certain object for linguistics: namely langue. This is because even individual speech [parole] does not exist, by definition, without language [langue].

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[3] 'Arbitrary' is the word normally used in talking about Saussure's thought, and the word that occurs in the English version of his Course. However, it is not to be understood in quite the sense normally associated with it. A better word to use in the place of 'arbitrary' and its cognates might be 'conventional'. That is, when Saussure writes of the "arbitrary matching up of sound-images with concepts", he does not mean that it is done at random, or at the whim of each individual user at each occasion of use. Rather Saussure merely means that the particular matching that occurs does not follow any natural (i.e. asocial) necessity. This is not to imply, as we discuss, that each speaker can do the matching she chooses. We shall retain the use of 'arbitrary' and its cognates, however, in order to remain consistent with the English translation of Saussure's work.

[4] By a 'system of virtual representation' we mean any sort of computational system which, although not actually storing emplates, is able to make comparisons between inputs of different times past. We think that it must be generally acknowledged that the mind is a virtually representational system, if not an outright representational one.

1.0.2 Methodology.

Saussure is quite clear about his methodological preference for language over speech. He says, “[F]rom the very outset we must put both feet on the ground of language and use language as the norm of all other manifestations of speech [langage] (p.9)” Hence for Saussure, there is no possibility of studying the phonological production of persons, as informational messages, except through the study of the language [langue] to which they correspond. It is, of course, still possible for the physiologist to study the purely acoustic production of sound, but this study is not one embraced by semiology, but rather by physics. In later sections of this paper we shall claim it is possible to study this very subject prohibited by Saussure. For convenience, we shall hence continue to use 'parole' in the sense defined by Saussure; however we shall use the term 'speech', or 'individual speech' to refer the physiological/acoustical aspect of langage. This is contrary to the convention of the translator of Saussure's book, who uses 'individual speech' as a synonym for the French 'parole'.

Let us turn to an examination of Saussure's reasons for focussing the attention of linguistics on langue, and not parole. His primary reason for this is that parole is an entirely heterogeneous affair, it follows the whims and peculiarities of each individual speaker. This mass is far too unsystematic to formulate any laws about. Langue, by contrast, is an homogeneous structure, which is composed of links between signifiers (sound-images) and signifieds (concepts). All the objects within langue are of exactly the same sort: they are associations between two different kinds of psychological objects.

1.0.3 The negative definition of the sign.

There is another, even more important, sense in which langue is an homogeneous structure. It is in this respect, which we shall now explain, that we must call langue a structure, rather than an object. We shall call this 'the negative definition of the signifier and signified'. According to Saussure,

> ”[C]oncepts [and sound-images] are purely differential and defined not by their positive content but negatively by their relations with the other terms of the system. Their most precise characteristic is in being what the others are not (p.117).”

Or again,

> ”[I]n language there are only differences without positive terms. Whether we take the signified or the signifier, language has neither ideas nor sounds that existed before the linguistic system, but only conceptual and phonic differences that have issued from the system (p.120).”

This may easily be illustrated, both in the case of the signifier and in that of the signified.

1.0.3.1 Phonetic definition.

We may see the negative definition of the signifier by an examination of an English phone, e.g. /k/. What distinguishes /k/ from the other English phones /m/, /a/, /t/, /p/, /g/, etc. is not any positive trait of the sound itself, but merely those features in which it differs from the other sounds. Hence, /k/ is distinguished from /m/, /a/, etc. by not being a continuant. /k/ is distinguished from /t/, /p/, etc. by its articulation being behind the velar ridge. It is distinguished from /g/ only by its lack of voicing. However, /k/ has no positive quality of its own; any sound which is non-continuant, unvoiced, and articulated behind the velar ridge is an English /k/, whether it be implosive or explosive, aspirated or non-aspirated, palatalized or non-palatalized, or having a palatal-velar, palatal, or glottal articulation. We know that these possibilities do not produce a common sound by the fact that they are distinguished in some languages.

1.0.3.2 Semantic definition.

The same situation can be shown on the signified side of the sign (where a 'sign' is defined as a signifier/signified link). For example, Sanskrit distinguishes three degrees of number, where English only distinguishes two. Conceptually, the Sanskrit plural does not have the same value as the English plural. However, this cannot be because of some positive value of the Sanskrit concept ['plural'][5], because every group of objects, real or imagined, which would be classified in Sanskrit to be plural, would be similarly classified in English. Rather, the difference in conceptual value of the plurals of the two languages comes solely through the difference in the signifieds to which they are opposed. In Sanskrit the plural classification has two numeric oppositions: ['singular'] and ['dual']; whereas in English there is only the opposition ['singular']. The example we have given is one of an opposition of grammatical morphemes; however, it is clear enough that the same applies to lexical oppositions. An example of this might be the English words 'sensual' and 'sensuous', or 'continual' and 'continuous', (or rather, the signifieds of these words), which once had a specific conceptual opposition, but have generally lost it. Hence English is left without the means of distinguishing two concepts, because the concepts themselves were a product of an arbitrary division of thought.

1.0.4 The objectivity of the sign.

Having sketched some of Saussure's thinking, it is now possible to bring out the aspect of his schema which is really the important one for the purposes of this paper. We shall call this aspect the 'objectivity of the sign'. Since the sign is a psychological entity, the objectivity of the sign must be, in essence, a phenomenological claim. That is: it is claimed that each sign, and the whole structure of

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[5] I shall use the square brackets around the names of conceptual values. These values are not the same as either the thing named, or the word naming (though in Saussure, and elsewhere there is a close tie between the word itself and the concept). Hence, [snow] is to be distinguished from both snow (the stuff) and 'snow' (the word).

relations of signs, is present to each speaker as an unchangeable, impervious whole. In Saussure's words, “[Langue] is . . . outside the individual who can never create nor modify it by himself; it exists only by virtue of a sort of contract signed by the members of a community (p.14).” This contract[6] is, in a phrase of Lacan, “always already given.” However, langue is not only outside the will of the individual, it is also outside the will of the collective. Saussure says this slightly later, “[Langue] always eludes the individual or social will (p.17).” We see this in the various social attempts, such as the French Academy's, to regulate language; these never entirely succeed.

The objectivity of the sign stems, for Saussure, from its very arbitrariness. Even where there is a partial iconic[7] value to a sign, this is dominated by element of arbitrariness once it joins the system of langue. This is clear in the case of onomatopoeia. Even where a word originates because of its natural connection with the thing it stands for, once the word exists it is subject to the same mutations as any other word in the language. It may seem paradoxical that a sign can be both arbitrary and conventional, and yet impervious to change by either an individual or the collective will. Saussure acknowledges this,

> “The signifier, though to all appearances freely chosen with respect to the idea that it represents, is fixed, not free, with respect to the linguistic community that uses it. The masses have no voice in the matter, and the signifier chosen by language [langue] could be replaced by no other. This fact, which seems to embody a contradiction, might be called colloquially, 'the stacked deck.' We say to language: 'Choose!' but we add: 'It must be this sign and not other.' No individual, even if he [sic] willed it, could modify in any way at all the choice that has been made; and what is more, the community itself cannot control so much as a single word; it is bound to the existing language (p.71).”

This seeming paradox may be reconciled in several ways, as its peculiarity is really a conditioned reaction, not a product of the logical structure of the two facts about langue. Some of the

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[6] An obvious confusion presents itself at this point in connection with the word 'contract'. This is nearly the same ambiguity that arises with many seventeenth and eighteenth century thinkers over the so-called 'social contract'. One reading of 'contract' would be a literal one in which some collective actually met and somehow agreed on particular conventions. The conventions of interest to Saussure are, of course, the semantic connections in langue. However, this is by no means intended by Saussure (and perhaps not by 'social contract' theorists). Rather, Saussure intends to make a purely phenomenological or psychological claim about the way that language “appears” to a speaker. That is, language stands in the same relation to the speaker as does a contract she (or her society) has actually entered into. However, we might still be unhappy with this phrasing, as an actual contract, unlike the language, is so-to-speak, “made to be broken”. But here again, we should do well to think of Saussure's “contract” in much the same way as the “social contract”. It is something which appears to have been inexorably entered into by some previous generation (with the emphasis still on “appears”).

[7] The word 'iconic' is here used in a somewhat technical sense. Pierce originated the tripartite distinction between icon, symbol, and sign — and these are fairly common terms in semiotics today. Ignoring the difference between symbol and sign, we may merely contrast 'iconic' with Saussure's term 'arbitrary'. An iconic sign is one in which some natural fact compels the particular relation which exists between a signifier and its signified. The most obvious example of this is an actual icon, which is fashioned in the shape of the figure which it is meant to represent.

facts we can point out to quell our reaction to the two “facts” about langue, are i) the continuity of new generations of speakers; ii) the multiplicity of signs and over-complexity of the system; iii) what Saussure calls the 'collective inertia towards innovation, which we shall call the 'double-blind predicament of speakers'. We shall make a few remarks about each of these above points, but it should be noted that these remarks, in keeping with the nature of the task at hand, shall be heuristic rather than rigorous.

1.0.4.1 The continuity of new generations

The continuity of new generations. Since human generations are not, even approximately, divided into distinct generational groups, each new speaker is faced by an overwhelming majority of established speakers. This is the same as the fact that every language, at every time in history (and prehistory), is already an historical object.

1.0.4.2 The multiplicity of signs and complexity of *langue*

The multiplicity of signs and complexity of langue. This point is certainly not any sort of “in-principle” reason for going along with the simultaneous objectivity and arbitrariness of the sign. However, the general point here is that since elements of langue are relatively motivated (e.g. regularity in declension and combination of lexical and grammatical morphemes), any change in a particular sign would involve the reworking of a large part of the rest of the language. This task generally exceeds the limits of a particular speaker, or even collective.

1.0.4.3 Collective inertia or the double-blind predicament

Collective inertia or the double-blind predicament. We find this to be the strongest point of the three. Saussure puts it merely that no speaker can change a sign unilaterally, and still achieve communication with her fellows. The coordination problems (as well as power-structure problems) prohibit simultaneous (i. e. all speakers at once) change in a sign, within a collective. We prefer to think of this problem in decision-theoretic terms. Assuming that communication is a desideratum, we may not change our semantic connections without hopelessly threatening the achievement of this goal. This is because a given speaker cannot know which new value is given to a sign by another, except through the communicative mechanism which depends on the system to which this sign in question belongs. Especially where we are concerned with the possible change of many signs, it is the most prudent communication-maximization policy to leave the system as it is aboriginally agreed upon. The consequence of this is that even where change does occur in language, it must occur item by item, and slowly enough so as to assure that all speakers have the means to become aware of the change.

1.0.5 Idealism and Teleology.

Now that we have presented Saussure's "objectivity of the sign", we shall consider our earlier claims about the nature of langue and parole. We claimed that langue involves us in both idealism and teleology. Saussure explicitly denies the former of these: "Language [langue] is concrete, no less so than speaking; and this is a help in our study of it. Linguistic signs, though basically psychological, are not abstractions (p.15)." If Saussure were to say that langue is an abstraction we could stop worrying about its ontological status. However, since he does not, we must remain concerned. We shall not examine this here; both because we shall eventually go against Saussure's own representation of his project, and because the discussion of langue's ontology shall prove useful in discussing the thought of several other thinkers.

The teleology in Saussure's langue, unlike the idealism, can be read directly from his text. We see several suggestions of this teleology in the introductory sections of his book. Saussure says, "language [langue] is not complete in any speaker; it exists perfectly only within a collectivity (p.14)." Or again,

> "Among all the individuals that are linked together by speech, some sort of average will be set up: all will reproduce — not exactly of course, but approximately — the same signs united with the same concepts (p.13)."

These suggest that some transcendent langue exists, outside of and prior to each speaker, and each speaker tends towards this transcendent structure. The notion of tendency which we use, however, is not unproblematic. We might approximate it by saying that, for Saussure, some causal force acts to bring each speaker's speech closer to the specifications set by langue; as against whatever tendencies there are for speakers to speak differently. Certainly there is not the conceptual association of the transcendent langue with the Good and the True, which is traditional to teleological thinking, but we still must recognize this as teleological.

In the fourth part, *Geographical Linguistics*, this teleological thinking is expounded on in more length. Chapter IV as a whole is concerned with this, so we shall not bother to reproduce it here. We shall merely say, in brief, how this teleology is explained. Saussure says that if language, as originally learnt were spoken by each person throughout her life, then the varieties of speech would be infinitely diverse. However, through the effect of verbal intercourse, speakers drop or change those items which differ from those of their fellow speakers. Further, speakers will not be encouraged in their use of an innovative item. This general family of observations may be thought of as a product of a decision--theoretic maximization of communication by speakers, in much the same way as we presented the collective inertia due to the double-blind predicament of speakers. Here, however, the emphasis is not on conservatism but on the goal-directedness of the community of speakers. Every speaker tries to use items in such a way as to maximize communication; as a result, Saussure claims, the speakers tend toward a common language [langue]. This is teleology in a respectable scientific outfit, but it is unquestionably a teleological theory.

1.1 Criticisms of Saussure.

We should now like to move on to some of the criticisms which have been made of Saussure, and his langue/parole distinction, by later structuralist writers. In the process of doing this we hope both to illustrate the idealist presuppositions of Saussure's thinking and to deny the objectivity of the sign, at least in the sense in which Saussure conceives it. We shall focus on three writers, each with her own rather sharply different goal, who level similar criticism of Saussure's schema. These writers are V. N. Vološinov, Jacques Lacan, and Julia Kristeva. There are two aspects present in each of them which speak against the langue/parole distinction as cast by Saussure. The first of these aspects is the conception of the psyche. For Saussure it was possible to establish, in a objective way, what signifier/signified connections were psychologically made by a particular speaker. This implies a conception of the psyche as a closed system. Neither Vološinov, Lacan, nor Kristeva are comfortable with the possibility or coherency of establishing these connections, precisely because of their conceptions of the human psyche. Each of these authors tend to drop the subjective consciousness from the picture, altogether. The second aspect of these authors' thought which speaks against Saussure's schema is the manner in which signifier/signified links are present to speakers. Where Saussure saw these links as being objectively presented to the subjective consciousness, Vološinov, Lacan, and Kristeva focus on the presentation of speech in its concrete actuality, to the detriment of langue in its systematicity.

1.2 Vološinov.

Let us first turn to an examination of Vološinov, who is of the three probably the most accessible. We should like to first discuss Vološinov's rejection of the Saussurian relation of a speaker to langue. This point concerns a speaker's own relation to her speech, and shall keep us closer to the framework of Saussure than the former aspect above. This former aspect may be said to concern the interpretive relation of a hearer to another speaker. The conclusions we shall draw from an examination of this former aspect shall be more radical, and by the its nature involve us in more complexity. Hence, we shall defer that discussion momentarily.

1.2.1 The subject.

Vološinov admits, perhaps with more generosity than he need have, that it is at least coherent to speak of the manner in which langue is presented to the subjective consciousness. However, even this admission is tempered by an immediate rejection of granting langue an objective ontological status. This brings Vološinov into immediate conflict with Saussure, at least under one reading of the latter. However, this conflict is best left until later for its resolution. This is because even if Saussure is read as casting langue as fully objective, it is consequently also true that Saussure sees langue as being presented objectively. This is merely the rather banal fact that Saussure does not believe langue to be objective, yet unknowable — which would be a rather awkward belief. Vološinov states this admission:

> “If we claim that language as a system of incontestable and immutable norms exists objectively, we commit a gross error. But if we claim that language, with respect to the individual consciousness, is a system of norms, that such is the mode of existence of language for each member of any given language community, then what we are expressing in these terms is a completely objective relationship (p.66).”

He goes on, however:

> ”Whether the fact itself is correctly constituted, whether language actually does appear only as a fixed and inert system of norms to the speaker's consciousness — that is another question (p.67)”

The conclusion, when Vološinov asks, “Does language really exist for the speaker's subjective consciousness as an objective system of incontestable, normatively identical forms (p.67)?”, will be that it does not.

As pointed to above, Vološinov believes that rather than towards language as system, “the speaker's focus of attention is brought about in line with the particular, concrete utterance he [sic] is making (p.67).” For Vološinov, this must always be the case; because “the meaning of a word is determined entirely by its context (p.79).” Independently of some particular situation of use, there is no underlying meaning to a given signifier. It is only by reifying some finite number of uses of a signifier that dictionaries or descriptive grammars can claim to give *the* meaning of a given word. Vološinov claims that these descriptive grammars, which retain the term langue, are only a product of linguistics' historical root in philology. Where the object under study is a finite corpus in a dead language, it is certainly possible (and useful even) to try to isolate what is common to all uses of a given word, or given construction. However, when we turn to trying to describe all the possible uses (i.e. the “core meaning”) of a word in a living language, we lose what is essential to the concrete ideological and socioeconomic environment in which the word occurs, and which gives it its meaning.

Vološinov makes some remarks about the actual presentation of language to us. Vološinov agrees that words seem to have particular semantic values in particular situations, but these “words are always filled with content and meaning drawn from behavior or ideology (p.70).” Rather than utterances having “only one linguistic criterion: correct versus incorrect (p.54)”,

> ”the criterion of linguistic correctness is submerged by a purely ideological criterion: an utterance's correctness is eclipsed by its truthfulness or falsity, its poeticalness or banality, . . . [whether it is] good or bad, important or unimportant, pleasant or unpleasant, and so on (p.70).”

This hints at the program we shall try to pursue in later sections of allowing grammaticality judgements to play a part in actual speech, but a part that is no different in kind from that played by judgements of truthfulness, vulgarity, clarity/unclarity, and the like. For example, ungrammaticality may be met with censure, but so may insincerity. It shall be in these comparisons that it shall eventually prove most poignant to turn back to the teleological nature of langue.

1.2.2 Saussure's Idealism.

The second part, here, of Vološinov's critique of Saussure's langue/parole distinction regards Saussure's conception of the human psyche. Before moving on to Vološinov's conception of the psyche, it shall be useful to push on Saussure's conception, particularly as regards the ontological status of langue. Saussure implicitly relies on a Rationalist conception of the psyche as a rational system, which is radically separated from the world. This generally goes hand-in-hand with an ontological dualism, in which mind is one kind of substance, and matter is quite another.

We need not be ontological dualists to adopt a Rationalist conception of the psyche, however. An alternative is to be material monists, but give a functional explanation of mind which demands a sharp distal/proximal split. The precise sense of this split depends, of course, on the particular functional explanation we give. However, in general we may explain it as follows. The functioning of the mind might involve a strict categorization of all cognition into two categories: those which we call distal and proximal. The distal part is that which is regularly consequent upon some external stimulation; the proximal is the "internal" portion of cognition, that which only stands in relation to other proximal cognition. If Saussure were to rely on an outright ontological dualism, it would follow immediately that langue is an ideal, not a material object. This is by Saussure's very own definition of langue (my p.4): "the sum of word-images stored in the minds of all individuals." According to ontological dualism, anything stored in the substance of the mind is an ideal object.

There is more difficulty in pushing Saussure's conception of langue if he is read as a functionalist (of mind). However, even under this reading Saussure cannot maintain his conception of langue. The two important things to keep in mind are Saussure's claim that "Language [langue] is concrete . . . [and] linguistic signs . . . are not an abstraction (my p.11)."; and the objectivity of the Sign. The objectivity of the Sign demands that, under a functional picture, a signifier/signified link is presented as a distal object. This is not, of course, to claim that langue must be a distal object, but merely that the psyche has the same organization relative to a signifier/signified link as it does relative to a distal object. Once we add in that signs are not abstractions, but concrete objects, we are, however, forced to call signifier/signified links actual distal objects. We may retreat slightly from this by claiming, not that signs are realized outside the speaker, but merely that the mind is a modular structure containing a part which contains representations of signifier/signified links. Saussure's claim of the concreteness of signs does, at this point, demand a strictly representational system. However, now we are faced with Saussure's statement, "[Langue] exists perfectly only within a collectivity (my p.11)." When we take this into account is impossible to say any longer that each speaker merely stands in relation to a modular representation of her own idiolect. For Saussure, the idiolect is always an imperfect copy of the langue. However, this excludes the location of the objective langue from a modular portion of the mind. It is also clear, and Saussure says this himself, that signifier/signified links are psychological, not physical objects. Hence the only possible "place" left for langue is, presumably, some ideal realm. Perhaps the easiest way to resolve this is to make the move which Vološinov points out; namely, allow that langue is subjectively presented as objective, but deny it real objectivity. That is, as Vološinov says,

> ”Language as a stable system of normatively identical forms is merely a scientific abstraction, productive only in connection with certain particular practical and theoretical goals (p.98).”

One of these goals may be the eminently practical one of communication, but the objective langue remains an abstraction.

1.2.3 Vološinov's Semioticity.

Let us now turn to Vološinov's conception of the human psyche. For Vološinov, the psyche does not have the radical separation from the world which it does in the Rationalist conception. Rather, “The individual consciousness is a socio-ideological fact (p.12), [which] can only arise and become a viable fact in the material embodiment of signs (p.11).” We are to understand here that “the sign may not be divorced from concrete social forms of intercourse (p.2).” Hence where Vološinov speaks of the 'sign' he means, in Saussure's closest approximation, parole. More neutrally, we may equate Vološinov's use of the word 'sign' with 'utterance', where the latter is thought of as a purely physical event. The collection of all the habitual forms of utterance within a particular group Vološinov calls 'ideology', or more specifically, 'behavioral ideology'. Keeping this in mind, we are to understand that “there is no basic division between the psyche and ideology; the difference is one of degree only (p.33).” And further, “[T]he mutual delimitation of the psyche and ideology can be solved on the unitary territory of the ideological sign which embraces both (p.39).” The picture which is being drawn here is of the human psyche occupying, not some pre-given role in the organism homo sapiens, but a particular section of the ideological system of a society.

Hence as the ideological realm of signs is constitutive of the human psyche, there is no part of the mind which can properly be called pre-linguistic, or at any rate, no part which is pre-semiotic. This is true especially of experience, which to the Rationalists was the essence of the subjective mind. Vološinov says, for example,

> ”The experiential, expressible element and its outward objectification are created, as we know, out of one and the same material. After all, there is no such thing as experience outside of embodiment in signs. . . . It is not experience that organizes expression, but the other way around — expression organizes experience (p.85). . thought and experience, [consciousness] has already constituted a social event on a small scale and is not an inner act on the part of the individual (p.90).”

This complete semioticity of consciousness shall prove very threatening to Saussure's objectivity of the Sign.

1.2.3.1 Saussure versus Vološinov.

For Saussure, the sound-image and concept must exist in the mind of a speaker, prior to being joined together. It is admittedly true that, for Saussure, neither the mass of phonic representations, nor that of concepts is differentiated prior to being divided by language. This is clearly a step away from a Rationalist picture of clear and distinct ideas, which are differentiated by their individual natures. As we have pointed to above, Saussure's concepts, and his sound-images, exist purely through their differentiation from one another. Nonetheless, there is a pre-given medium of thought in which these concepts and sound-images are placed; and this medium is necessarily pre-semiotic. With Vološinov, even this pre-semiotic medium is taken away. Vološinov's most startling, though subtle, phrasing of this is: “A sign can only be illuminated with the help of another sign (p.36).” Here we are to read sign in the sense in which Saussure proposes it, namely as a signifier/signified link; at least this is the interpretation we shall push.

1.2.3.2 The absence of langue.

Let us examine some of the consequences of this view of Vološinov's. It first of all insists that a sign is not illuminated by an always already given psychological link between signifier and signified. The illumination of a given sign call it 'a', can only come through the production or utilization of a second sign, whose signifier is the signified of 'a', or whose signified is the signifier of 'a', or which signifies 'a' itself. These signifiers of signifiers find no stopping point in the subjective consciousness, and hence no already given langue. Rather, as later Structuralists shall claim, the “unending chain of signifiers” must find its ground in something which is beyond signification itself. For Lacan, for example, this something is the drive; for Althusser, it is the societal totality, and ultimately the means of production.

1.2.3.3 Economic determinism.

The latter view is probably close to Vološinov's belief. Vološinov really only points at this economic determinism, but it is nonetheless present. He says, for example, “Production relations and the sociopolitical order shaped by those relations determine the full range of verbal contacts between people (p.19)”; or again,

> “In order for any item, from whatever domain of reality it may come, to enter the social purview of the group and elicit ideological semiotic reaction, it must be associated with the vital socioeconomic prerequisites of the particular group's existence; it must somehow, even if only obliquely, make contact with the bases of the groups material life (p.22).”

A few other comments to this effect are also in his writing. The importance of this is not to try to find the exact basis of this “something” which grounds the signifiers in Vološinov. This exact basis is never given. The importance of these quotes, immediately above, is to show that Vološinov realizes the need for some thing to ground the ideological/semiotic system of signs. In a relatively natural extension of Marx, Vološinov identifies semioticity with ideology, and hence grounds it in the relations and mode of production.

The exact ground of the sign in Vološinov is unimportant to seeing how Vološinov's conception of the human psyche is incompatible with Saussure's notion of a subjectively objective langue. This incompatibility follows very immediately from the explanations we have already given. It is quite simply a matter that, for Vološinov, there does not exist any psychological medium in which to represent, prior to semioticity, sound-images and concepts and in which to join the two. The consequences of this might, at first glance, seem to be that there is simply no way in which speakers can speak. However, as we shall show later, the actual consequence is short of this, though still somewhat radical. The actual result of Vološinov's conception of the human psyche, and the ideology to which it belongs, is that the signified of the sign drops out, leaving only signifiers connected to one another. This elimination of the signified is largely common to all the structuralist thinking which seeks to eliminate the human subject from its ontology.

1.3 Lacan.

With the elimination of the signified, we may tie in the thinking of the psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan. It shall not be possible to give a complete, or even a cursory, summary of Lacan's thought, as he is perhaps the most enigmatic thinker of the twentieth century. All that we shall attempt in these confines is some sketches of the parts of Lacan which are relevant to our rejection of Saussure's langue/parole distinction. Before we begin, however, it should be acknowledged that the use to which we shall draw on aspects of Lacan's thought shall be contrary to his thinking as a whole. In particular, Lacan accepts the existence of a somewhat Saussurian langue, though not without some slight modifications. Our effort shall not be to show the actual train of Lacan's thought, which includes the langue which we shall reject; rather, we shall merely try to add some aspects of Lacan's thought to the framework we started in the above discussion of Vološinov.

We started our rejection of the langue/parole distinction with a mention of two lines which could lead to these rejection. These were, briefly, firstly, the nature of the psyche; and secondly, the actual nature of language in the psyche of a speaker. It is only the first of these with which we shall concern ourselves, as regards Lacan. Clearly, with a rejection of the closed, unified nature of the psyche comes a rejection of the sort of objective presentation of langue to this consciousness which we found in Saussure. However, our focus shall be to merely point out Lacan's conception of the psyche; we shall leave the consequences dangling.

1.3.1 The mirror stage.

The chief concept which we shall clarify from Lacan is that of the 'mirror stage'. Lacan takes this term from the phenomenon in which an infant presented with its own reflection will be able to perform acts requiring more coordination that the infant is able to perform at will. With Lacan, this phenomenon is generalized to explain the original creation of the symbolic realm, and with it the subject. This symbolic realm is a term-of-art of Lacan's, which stands for what we might call the semiological; it is that which concerns the exchange of signifier for signifier. Lacan describes the mirror stage:

> ”We have only to understand the mirror stage as an identification, in the full sense that analysis gives to the term: namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image (Ecr., p.2).”

Jacqueline Rose makes explicit the linguistic nature of this image,

> “For Lacan the subject is constituted through language — the mirror image represents the moment when the subject is located in an order outside itself to which it will henceforth refer. The subject is the subject of speech (Fem., p.31).”

This image which appears in language creates a division within the speaking subject: on the one hand, the subject retains her aboriginal drive (the imaginary realm); on the other, the subject internalizes the contradictory system of signifiers (the symbolic realm). Rose continues,

> ”[T]he subject can only operate within language by constantly repeating that moment of fundamental and irreducible division. The subject is therefore constituted in language as this division or splitting (Fem., p.31).”

Hence “for Lacan, men and women are only ever in language. Men and women are signifiers bound to the common usage of language (Fem., p.49).” Lacan puts this denial of the autonomous subject in an eloquent metaphor,

> ”A certificate tells me that I was born. I repudiate this certificate: I am not a poet, but a poem. A poem that is being written, even if it looks like a subject (FF, p.viii).”

1.3.2 The Other and the phallus.

We may give a thumbnail sketch of how this denial of the autonomous subject, and split in what subject is left, comes about. We need to bring to the fore two terms for this sketch. These are the 'Other' and the 'phallus'. The Other is the primary object outside the predeveloped speaking subject. We may think of this primary object as the mother, or at least call it by the term 'mother'. The phallus stands beyond the Other, and is, according to the imaginary order, the object of the Other's desire. Lacan explains these terms and their relation to the subject:

> ”If the phallus is a signifier then it is in the place of the Other that the subject gains access to it. But in that the signifier is only there veiled and as the ratio of the Other's desire, so it is this desire of the Other as such which the subject has to recognize.then the child wishes to be the phallus so as to satisfy this desire (Fem., p.83)”

Rose echoes this relation, perhaps more comprehensibly,

> ”[T]he child's desire for the mother does not refer to her but beyond her, to an object, the phallus, whose status is first imaginary and then symbolic (Fem., p.38).”

However, “[T]he status of the phallus is a fraud (Fem., p.40).” There is no object which stands in the place reserved for the phallus. It is when the pre-subject finds the absence of an actual phallus that signification begins. A shift to the symbolic occurs, and the absent phallus is made present, though not as the object it claimed to be, but rather as a signifier. In our societies, it is the penis which plays this role of signifier; however, in keeping with Saussure's arbitrariness of the sign, any signifier could work equally well. In fact, all signs do work just the way the penis fills in for the absent phallus: the signifier is necessary only with the absence of the signified. The phallus does not, however, stand on the same level as all signifiers. As Lacan says, “The phallus is the privileged signifier of that mark where the share of the logos is wedded to the advent of desire (Fem., p.82).” That is, the phallus is the signifier which bridges the imaginary and the symbolic, and which originates signification.

1.3.3 The autonomy of the signifier.

With the advent of the signifier in the psyche comes “the incessant sliding of the signified under the signifier (Ecr., p.154).” That is, the signified drops out of the determination of the psyche when the phallus is seen to be missing. This process is not confined to the occurrence of the privileged signifier of the phallus. With the production of every signifier, a split is recreated in the human psyche, in which the signifier is inserted into the place of the absent signified. We spoke of the deletion of the signified at the end of the discussion of Vološinov; it is here, with Lacan, that we can explain this deletion. Between the signifier and the signified is always a play of presence and absence, with the present terms (the signifiers) forming, as a consequence, an autonomous network. Lacan says,

> ”[W]e cling to the illusion that the signifier answers to the function of representing the signified, or better, that the signifier has to answer for its existence in the name of any signification whatever (Ecr., p.150).”

But in fact, “The signifier alone guarantees the theoretical coherence of the whole as a whole (Ecr., p.126).” Where the whole in question here is both the system of language and the psyche which reflects it.

With this autonomy of the signifier we arrive at the conclusion we pointed to with Vološinov; namely, that “the meaning of each linguistic unit can only be established by reference to another (Fem., p.32).” That is, there is no subject who may master a sign, and fix the signifier/signified links in her mind. For Lacan, as for Vološinov, “the truth of the subject, even when he [sic] in the position of master, does not reside in himself, but, as analysis shows, in an object that is, of its nature, concealed (FF, p.5).” The truth of the subject may be taken to mean the signification of the subject; and the concealed object is in the indefinite signifier links which always exceed the subject. These links must lie in the whole practice of the community of speaking beings, that is, in ideology.

1.4 Kristeva — Semiotics and Semiology.

At this point it may seem as if all we have really done is substitute the term 'ideology' for the rejected 'langue'. We do not believe this to be so, and this can be shown in the difference in the programs of Kristeva's semiotics, and Saussure's semiology. Kristeva herself does not reject the place of semiology (whose key item is langue), she merely suggests her semiotics as a supplemental study. We shall claim not only that semiotics can edge out semiology, but that it must. Kristeva is well aware of Lacan, and generally works within the framework set out by him. That is, for both Lacan and Kristeva, speech exists only at the place of division between the imaginary and the symbolic (for Kristeva, between the semiotic and the symbolic). Kristeva puts it,

> ”[S]emiotics, by studying language as a discourse enunciated by a speaking subject, grasps its fundamentally heterogeneous nature . . . [it] is at once system and transgression (negativity), a product of both the 'drive-governed basis of sound production' and the social space in which enunciation takes place (Read, p.25).”

Kristeva's semiotics operates in that space which Saussurian linguistics refuses to; namely, the individual 'drive-governed basis of sound production'. Kristeva makes this clear,

> ”[S]tructural linguistics could not become a linguistics of speech or discourse; it lacked a grammar, for in order to move from sign to sentence [our utterance] the subject had to be acknowledged and no longer kept vacant (Des., p.128).”

It is the place of the subject which Kristeva wishes to establish for linguistics. However, it is not a Cartesian subject which shall occupy this place; rather, it is a split subject which speaks only through the internalization of the radical alterity of the symbolic realm. However, this subject is only has one foot in the symbolic; the other is still in the imaginary, the pre-linguistic or trans-linguistic drive. It is this second realm, which Kristeva labels the semiotic. She says, “The semiotic is linked to the pre-Oedipal primary process (Read, p.12).” Since this semiotics studies just the opposite side of the equation of the speaking subject as does Saussure's semiology, it demand a new methodology, a new logic. Kristeva says of this, “[S]emiotic logic [is] of the sociality in which the (speaking, historical) subject is embedded (Read, p.25).” That is, it is the logic of exactly that which Saussure thought unimportant and accidental to language.

For Kristeva, it is only where semiotics and semiology come together that speech occurs, and these only come together within a divided subject. She says,

> ”[P]ractice is taken as meaning the acceptance of a symbolic law together with the transgression of that law for the purpose of renovating it. . . . [W]e can speak of practice wherever there is a transgression of systematicity, i.e., a transgression of the unity proper to the transcendental ego. The subject of the practice cannot be the transcendental subject, who lacks the shift, the split in logical unity brought about by language which separates out, within the signifying body, the symbolic order from the workings of the libido (this last revealing itself by the semiotic disposition) (Read, p.29).”

However, we are not quite to equate semiotics with the working of the drive itself, for this is the domain of psychology. Rather, semiotics studies the processes of the drive as it is specifically shaped by linguistic practice. For Kristeva, semiotics is "talking about something other than language — a practice for which any particular language is the margin (Des., p.25)."

Semiotics thus turns towards each network of signs, not insofar as it forms a system, but rather insofar as it creates and constrains a practice. Kristeva says,

> "Semiotics must not be allowed to be a mere application to signifying practices of the linguistic model — or any other model, for that matter. Its raison d'etre, if it is to have one, must consist in its identifying the systematic constraints within each signifying practice (Read, p.26)."

We should note here that this rejection of semiology for the sake of semiotics, is nearly identical to the rejection of semantics for the sake of pragmatics which we shall discuss below. What is crucial to Kristeva's project is that she recognizes the heterogeneous nature of actual speech, which the formal structure of langue can not capture. She does not go so far as to out-and-out reject langue, as we shall, but she certainly does point towards the limits of its explanatory power. Kristeva sees that there is something deeply individual about speech, which may nonetheless be subject to systematic constraint. This systematic constraint is a very different sort of affair from the closed rules of Saussure's structural linguistics. Where the latter can decide every sentence as grammatical or ungrammatical, and as having some given meaning, the former may only exercise pressure, not legislate. The former is langue, the latter ideology.

2.0 Sentence-meaning and utterance-meaning.

We shall now turn to an issue which stands to analytic philosophy as the langue/parole division does to continental philosophy. This is the possibility of a semantic theory of language. As above, we shall largely reject such a theory in favor of pragmatic explanations of language use. However, in analytic philosophy there is no figure analogous to Vološinov, in his thoroughgoing rejection of the abstract system of langue. Rather, we are faced with thinkers who try, at most, to limit the area in which semantics can explain the meaning or force of an utterance; that is, who limit the element of sentence-meaning in a particular utterance-meaning. In analytic philosophy no one really thinks that utterance-meaning contains no sentence-meaning, nor does anyone believe that sentence-meaning can be the whole of utterance-meaning. Rather, analytic philosophers tend to take stands along a continuum of the supposed degree of sentence-meaning in utterance-meaning, or perhaps on a continuum of the occasions where sentence-meaning is sufficient.

Nonetheless, it is possible to separate these philosophers into camps over whether they believe that a semantic theory can be expanded indefinitely to encompass more and more phenomena. Some believe that this is the case; others that,

> ”[N]onlinguistic beliefs, intentions of the speaker, and other factors enter into the interpretation of utterances in so intimate — and perhaps so fluctuating and indefinite — a fashion that it is hopeless and misguided to attempt to represent independently the 'purely grammatical' component of meaning (SGG, p.67).”

The author of this above quote is Noam Chomsky, whom I shall take for a fairly typical proponent of the first camp; namely, those who think that a semantic explanation is adequate to explain the meanings of speech. However, Chomsky more than most sees his position as an entirely empirical one. We see this, for example, in his acknowledgement that it might yet turn out that the assertion which he makes above is true. We choose Chomsky for explication because, in addition, he has does some of the most concrete and incontrovertible work in syntax. Although we shall eventually disagree with the status granted to syntacticality, we shall agree that humans must have the sort of syntax generator proposed by Chomsky.

In response to the camp which sees semantics as largely adequate to interpreting utterances we shall discuss three authors. The first is Grice, who suggests that an understanding of intentions is necessary for understanding the force and meaning of an utterance. The second is Austin, who shows a whole class of utterances in which the semantic “meaning” of an utterance, if such exists at all, cannot suffice to explain the force of the actual issuance. Lastly we shall discuss a recent article by Davidson which directly denies that there is anything which a semantic-theory can be a theory of. In the last author it is worth noting that the author is primarily reacting to his work. We find it curious that, within analytic philosophy, the most powerful opponents of semantic theories started out as the most powerful proponents of the same.

2.1 Semantic theories.

In general, we might divide semantic theories into two sorts: intensional and extensional. This difference corresponds, roughly, to Frege's distinction between *sense* and *reference*. Intensional semantics tries to explain meaning in terms of the relations of concepts to one another. Any theory of truth which is likely to be attached to an intensional theory of meaning shall be in terms of the logical relations of the terms and predicates. This theory will include the truths of first-order logic, as well as a few others. For example, two predicates, P^1 and Q^1 might be conceptually linked in a manner such that $\forall x[P^1(x)$ implies $Q^1(x)]$. Then if an expression (Φ implies P^1) is true (i.e. a logical truth), (Φ implies Q^1) is true. This ability to speak of conceptual links commits the intensional semanticist to an essentialist ontology, if the words/concepts are to correspond to the world in his theory. That is, if as above, two predicates P^1 and Q^1 have some logical connection and these two predicates are true of some particular objects in the world, then this must be because the objects picked out by each predicate have some common essence or property.

Extensional semantics tries explain meaning in terms of reference. Each term stands for some set of individuals in the world; and each predicate is true of some set of individuals. This is the traditional nominalist position, and hence the extensional semanticist is not ontologically committed to properties or essences. The extensional theory of truth is in many ways similar to the intensional one. It also starts with the tautologies of first-order logic. However, conceptual connections are ruled out. In their stead, we may have predicates (or terms) related in terms of their extensions in the world. For example, it may be that $\forall x[x\in \{y|\ P^1(y)\}$ implies $x\in \{y|\ Q^1(y)\}]$. *This* use of the set notation does not commit our ontology to anything besides individuals; in particular, we need not believe that such things as sets exist. Quine points out in *Set Theory and Its Logic* that we may “simplify” an expression of the sort '$x\in \{y|\ P^1(y)\}$' to the expression '$P^1(x)$'. Our use of the set-theoretic notation may be thought of as only a fanciful way of talking about the predicates themselves. Of course, this is not to say that *all* use of set-theoretic notation is reducible to talk about predicates, but only the piece that concerns us here. Using the “simplification” suggested by Quine, we may reduce the extensional statement above to the form, '$\forall x[P^1(x)$ implies $Q^1(x)]$'. One immediately notices that this statement is identical in form to the intensionalist statement of the previous paragraph. However, the extensionalist's statement is not a statement about the concepts linked to P^1 and Q^1, but rather a statement about how words map to objects in the world.

Chomsky, who we mentioned above, is a proponent of intensional semantic explanation. This sort of explanation, roughly, originates for analytic philosophy with Russell, and perhaps Frege. Russell's theory of definite descriptions, for example, is an intensional explanation of the meanings of names. Extensional explanation of semantic meanings owes much of its origin to Tarski's redundancy theory of truth. David Kaplan, Quine, Kripke, Davidson, and verificationists are some examples of theorists of extensional meaning. Kaplan and Kripke wish to spell this out in terms of possible worlds; Quine, and to an extent, Davidson, wishes for an extensional theory of meaning because his behaviorism rules out intensional explanation. We shall start the explication of semantic theories in analytic philosophy with a rough sketch of extensional theories. Next, we shall discuss in more detail Chomsky's intensional approach to semantics. No effort shall be made to explicate other intensional semantic theories than Chomsky's, as they shall all share the aspects which we shall criticize. Before we discuss these theories we should make the caveat that extensional and intensional theories are not mutually exclusive. Each could be used to explain some particular class of expressions, but only between the two would all expressions be explained.

2.1.1 Extensional theories.

Extensional theories of meaning are, roughly and as a rule, theories of truth. Some retreat has been made from this in the proposal to shift the concern from truth to warranted assertability. This might be, for example, a move which various of the verification oriented logical positivists wish to make. However, this move does not really affect extensional theories in a way which shall interest us. In general, extensional theories of meaning explain meanings by states of the world outside of the mind of the speaker of an utterance. This is so both of the “meanings” of singular terms and of the “meanings” of propositions. In the case of singular terms, our concern in extensional theories is generally with reference. Hence we encounter such terms-of-art as Donnellan's “reference by false description”, Kripke's “rigid designators”, and Kaplan's “direct reference”; all of which are used to point out that often our intentions are irrelevant to the reference of our words. When we turn to propositions, the extensional theories direct our attention to the circumstances in which a sentence, or utterance, is true; or perhaps to the ways in which it may be verified. For Quine, the meaning of a sentence might be the collection of circumstances in which a native speaker would utter it.

All of these cases have the general pattern of explaining meaning, in the vocabulary of set theory, as an injection of sentences into sets of things other than sentences. These “*things*” other than sentences are states-of-the-world, possible worlds, or perhaps events of the right sorts. Let us examine each of these, briefly.

2.1.1.1 Possible-World semantics

Possible world semantics is an extensional semantic theory which maps sentences into the worlds in which they are true. This is a change in the traditional nominalist positions in extensional semantics, in that the individual of concern are not the ordinary objects like tables and people, but are rather the possible worlds in which these things may be. David Kaplan, in several essays[8], develops a detailed set-theoretic model of what this amounts to. Kripke, more influentially, uses this framework in an intuitive way to make various arguments within analytic philosophy of language. The general

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[8] Some essays in which we see this are “DThat”, “On the Logic of Demonstratives”, and “Demonstratives”. See the bibliography for full information on these.

idea is that given any sentence, or perhaps a sentence together with a situation of utterance, there corresponds a set of possible worlds in which the sentence is true. The "meaning" of the sentence is, then, none other than this collection of worlds. The terms and predicates, as in the normal case, pick out sets of objects; however, these sets indexed for each possible world. That is, if we let $\{p_n\}= P$ be the set of possible worlds; and $\{o_m\}= O$ be the set of collections of objects; then the set of "objects" picked out by a term is actually a complete function from P into O containing pairs of the form $<p_n, o_m>$, for $p_n \in P$ and $o_m \in O$. Whether all the objects which are the elements of elements of O are real, or whether some of them are possible objects, is a version of the problem of haecceitism[9]. Either way, a sentence determines a set of possible worlds as follows. The subject(s) (which are terms) in a sentence pick out, in each possible world, some particular collection of objects o_m. Likewise, the predicates pick out, in each possible world, some collection o_k. The set of worlds picked out by a sentence is the set of worlds in which, for the appropriate o_m, o_k, o_k is a subset of o_m.

This can be extended, fairly easily, to include non-indicative sentences. For example, the "meaning" of an imperative sentence can be equated with the set of possible worlds in which the command is correctly carried out, together with an imperative flag. If we accept Quine's assertion that all occasional sentences can be replaced by equivalent standing sentences, then we can do so as a first stage transformation on every actual utterance in order to eliminate utterance situation from the domain of the "meaning" injection.

2.1.1.2 States-of-the-world semantics

"States-of-the-world" semantics is similar to possible world semantics, but perhaps more restrained in its ontology. The "meaning" of an indicative sentence is seen to be exactly the state-of-the-world it purports. For example, the stock example, 'snow is white' is evaluated as follows. First we determine the reference of the term 'snow'; namely, snow. Then we evaluate the predicate by the appropriate property. We might manage to do this without making our ontology too replete by defining a property as the "right" kind of resemblance to a paradigm case. In the nominalist explanation, we dispense with properties altogether and speak of sets of things which fulfill a predicate. At any rate, the "meaning" of 'snow is white' is cast as the stuff, snow, having the property (or fulfilling the predicate) of "being white". In Fregean terms, we may say the unfilled predicate together with the term make a true proposition, or rather the proposition "True". The idea here is that the set of things referred to by the term is a subset of the set of things fulfilling the predicate. The reference of every sentence as a whole is one of the two propositional values, True and False, but each sentence purports a subset relation between different collections of objects. Here there is no question of haecceitism, as there is only the real world for objects to exist in.

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[9] In particular, haecceitists would maintain that all objects are actual objects; while anti-haecceitists think that some objects are only potential.

2.1.1.3 Verification semantics.

The events which might found an extensional semantics are verifications. The meaning of an indicative sentence on this account is considered to be the claim that certain results have followed, or would follow, the “right” sort of experimental procedure. This is not merely a translation from a sentence to an equivalent, which might be part of an intensional semantics. Rather, we cast the verificationist semantics in a fully extensional way. Namely, we are given a partial function from pairs of events into sentences. This is a slight modification of our suggested injection of sentences into other *things*, in two ways. Since we have reversed the injection, it is now possible for sentences to correspond to multiple pairs of events. Also, since we have only set up a partial function, not every pair of events need be considered to explain the meaning of some sentence. It should be noted, in addition, that our function is into, not onto; hence the verificationist does not claim to necessarily give a meaning of every sentence. We may weaken this mapping slightly more to a partial relation between pairs of events and sentences. This would allow for sentences to be true synonyms. In plainer language, what is being done is cashing the “meaning” of (at least some) indicative sentences as one or more pairs of events with consequent events. The former events are thought of as the setting up of experimental conditions, the latter as the expected, or anyway purported, results. For example, one pair of events which may be considered the “meaning” (or part of it) of 'snow is white' might be: 1) Taking a snow sample and putting it in a properly working spectrometer; 2) The spectrometer reading equal amounts of all bands of visual light.

2.1.2 Intensional theories: Chomsky.

Having sketched a few possible positions in extensional semantics, we shall turn to intensional semantics; in particular, that of Noam Chomsky. The basic notion with which intensional semantics concerns itself is that of synonymy. Further ideas which we might hope to explain in an intensional semantics are entailment, presupposition, relations of degree, and categorical agreement. All of these are dealt with by Chomsky, particularly in his concern for the relation between syntax and semantics. Before showing Chomsky's specific treatment of some issues, however, we should make a thumbnail sketch of his lines of thought.

2.1.2.1 Recursive syntax.

Chomsky takes it as axiomatic that human language, by virtue of the fact that it can be learned, must be generated in a recursive fashion. The sentences in a language are presumed infinite in number, and the ability of humans to store information is presumed finite; hence the motivation for recursive rules. This recursive generation of natural language will be computationally equivalent to the abstract systems of Turing, Church, Kleene, et al. Given this axiom, Chomsky goes on to give some specific proposals about the sort of system which is involved in this recursive generation.

Chomsky's system sees semantics as being consequent to syntax, or perhaps independent of it — but certainly he does not believe syntax to depend on semantics. He says as much,

> "Investigation of proposals [that grammar, i.e. syntax, relies on semantic notions], however, invariably seems to lead to the conclusion that only a purely formal basis can provide a firm and productive foundation for the construction of grammatical theory (SS, p.95)."

This formal basis is the sorts of recursive procedures noted above. We may then assume that, for Chomsky, semantics is, so to speak, epiphenomenal to the generation of syntactic sentences, or other strings. The alternative — namely, that semantics is wholly dependent on utterance-context — is left empirically open, but not pursued.

The actual theory of syntax-based semantics, proposed by Chomsky, has undergone numerous modifications. The latest version which I shall try to explicate is that of the mid-1970's; though no essential revisions have followed this. We may think of a "Chomsky-machine", which should include persons as instantiations, as a syntactic machine to generate ordered quadruples. These quadruples consist in: a phonetic representation; a surface structure; a deep structure; and a semantic representation. We may call these elements, 'P', 's', 'd', and 'S' respectively. The Chomsky machine may be realized algorithmically in an indefinite number of ways. Hence, although the modelling Chomsky uses does not have the semantic representation, S, as its computational starting point, some equivalent procedure might. This might best correspond with our intuition that meaning should precede grammar in the mind of a speaker.

2.1.2.2 Syntactic structures.

Chomsky's modelling proceeds through a series of syntactic structures $Z= (P_1, ..., P_i, ..., P_n)$, where the following are true of the sequence: P_i is the deep structure d; P_n is the surface structure s; for some $h< i$, lexical insertion occurs between the structures P_h and P_{h+1}. In the earlier Chomsky it was thought that the semantic structure S could be determined solely by the deep structure $P_i= d$. However, later Chomsky was led to believe that S must depend on some transformation(s) P_j, for $i< j< n+1$. The particular concern which motivated this is some differences in the presuppositions of active and passive sentences[10]; where these have been presumed to differ only in surface structure. Following the computation of the sequence Z, a transformation is made on $P_n= s$ to produce the phonetic representation P. This, in a general way, explains the generation of the quadruples in question. Let us now turn to how this modelling can account for the semantic notions we mentioned above.

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[10] The difference in the presupposition of past-perfect active and passive is over whether the subject (in active version) is presumed living. The example here is that in 'Einstein has taught me physics', Einstein is presumed to be alive. With, 'I was taught physics by Einstein' no such presumption exists.

2.1.2.3 Synonymy and paraphrase.

The first of the notions to be explained is synonymy, and under this heading we should also be concerned with paraphrase. Chomsky originally thought that synonyms would be exactly those sentences, or other strings, which shared the same deep structure. This was later modified due to the difference in presupposition of some active and passive sentences, which are still presumed to share the same deep structure. Nonetheless, we may still recognize that identity of deep structure makes two sentences close paraphrases of each other. Of course, strict synonymy is a matter of identity of semantic representations; but since no concrete proposals have been properly elaborated for the system of semantic representation, this is a fact with little bite. The bite of Chomsky's own explanation comes from the relatively complete proposals for generation of the sequence Z which have been made. For the being, we may hence assume that identity of deep structure provides us with an adequate notion of synonymy.

Prior, in the sequence Z, to the determination of deep structure, lexical insertion was performed. It is at this stage that we expect to find the most of interest to semantic notions, as it is somehow the lexicon which seems to determine meaning, over and above grammar. Chomsky assumes here that our stock of lexical items is innate. He says this,

> “First, it is important to determine the universal, language-independent constraints on semantic features — in traditional terms, the system of possible concepts. The very notion of 'lexical entry' presupposes some sort of fixed, universal vocabulary in terms of which these objects are characterized . . . It is surely our ignorance of the relevant psychological and physiological facts that makes possible the widely-held belief that there is little or no *a priori* structure to the system of 'attainable concepts' (ATS, p.161).”

It is still allowable that some lexical entries may be compound forms, but the elements of which they are formed must nonetheless be innate. Given this innatist bias, Chomsky is freed from the need to explain the properties of the lexical entries themselves, except where these entries are compound forms.

Let us look at several manners in which particular synonyms and paraphrases may be explained by Chomsky's modelling. In the case of the four sentences,

(1) The vehicle is green;

(2) The car is green;

(3) The automobile is green;

(4) The truck is green;

we can pick out several different degrees of synonymy and paraphrase. Strict synonymy seems to hold between (2) and (3). We may then assume that the phonetic representations 'car' and 'automobile' are in free variation. If so, the deep structures of (2) and (3) are identical, and no transformation is made on S after the stage P_i in Z.

The relations between (1) and (2), (1) and (3), and (1) and (4) seem to be of the same sort. That is, (2), (3), and (4) are more specific in the information conveyed than is (1). We might plausibly explain this by assuming that the lexical items 'car', 'automobile', and 'truck' are compound lexical entries containing the primitive semantic notion, [vehicle]. Following the level P_{h+1} of lexical insertion, we may postulate that the presence of a compound lexical entry forces certain sorts of transformations. For example, in the structure which produces (1) we may assume P_h is of the form,

> 'Article—Noun—Copula—Adjective'.

Lexical insertion gives us the form,

> 'The—Vehicle—Is—Green'.

This is essentially the form of the surface structure also, and merely needs be transformed into a phonetic representation. However, the formation of (2), (3) or (4) is more complicated. Given the same syntactic form of P_h, we may postulate that the lexical insertion of the form,

> 'The—Vehicle, for Passengers, Four-wheeled—Is—Green'

occurs. This will, perhaps, then undergo another transformation resulting in,

> [The—Vehicle—Is—Green—[It(same thing)—Is—for Passengers, It(same thing)—Is—Four-Wheeled]]

as the semantic representation. For (4), similarly, we might have the semantic representation,

> [The—Vehicle—Is—Green—[It(same thing)—Is—for Materials, It(same thing)—Is—Four-Wheeled]].

These semantic representations are not actually proposed by Chomsky; they are our own. However, we believe these semantic representations to be enough in the spirit of Chomsky to demonstrate his approach to semantic relations. Assuming these semantic representations, we can see that the relation between (1) and (2), (1) and (3), and (1) and (4) are as hoped for: (2), (3), and (4) each contain the assertion of the content of (1), plus some additional information.

Similarly, we get the intuitively correct semantic connection between (2) and (4), or (3) and (4). There is the same basic type of assertion in each case, but with difference in the details of the compositional subject. The intuition we have that the words 'car' and 'truck' have a semantic connection is born out by the common primitive concepts [vehicle] and [four-Wheeled].

2.1.1.4 Entailment.

Similar sense can be made of the other semantic notions we have mentioned above. For example, relations of degree and entailment can both be easily accounted for by the idea of compositional lexemes. We probably feel inclined to say that (5i) entails (6).

(5) (i) John murdered the boy.

(6) John killed the boy.

This can be explained by the assumption that the lexeme [murder] is compositional. Perhaps it is composed of the lexemes [act-intentionally] and [kill]. This might be in conjunction with the fact that [kill] is itself composed of [cause-to-die] and [play-active-role]. Hence, the p_{h+1} of (5i) might be,

'John—Cause-to-die, Play-active-role, Act-intentionally—<past tense>—The—Boy'.

After the same sort of transformation suggested above we get the semantic representation,

(5) (ii) [John—Cause-to-die—<past tense>—The—Boy—[John—Play-active-role—
[John—Act-intentionally]]].

Notice that we have a strict ordering of the compositional elements of the lexeme [murder]. Hence we may add (7),

(7) John caused the boy to die;

and have the entailment of (6), (7) by (5i), and (7) by (6) — but not (5i) by (7), (5i) by (6), or (6) by (7).

2.1.1.5 Relations of degree.

Relations of degree are also explained by compositional lexemes. Consider,

(8) Jane was happy; and

(9) Jane was ecstatic.

We feel that (9) is a stronger form of (8). If we assume that the P_{h+1} of (9) is,

'Jane—Is—<past tense>—Happy, Extreme-degree',

we might have the semantic representation,

[Jane—Is—<past tense>—Happy—[Jane(does same in)—Extreme-degree]].

This expresses the relation of degree, as well as the entailment from (9) to (8). In general, we might see the marker, [X(does same in)—Extreme-degree], wherever a relation of degree exists between sentences. Perhaps this marker could contain some index to the actual degree. Since as far as we know every natural language contains only a finite number of degrees of any attribute, this might well be plausible.

2.1.1.6 Presupposition.

Let us now turn to how the modelling proposed by Chomsky can handle presupposition. Much of Chomsky's explanation of presupposition relies on focus, which he assumes to exist only in the surface structure. For example, consider the sentence,

(10) It was an ex-convict with a red SHIRT that he was warned to look out for.

Under normal intonation, the emphasis of the sentence falls on 'shirt'. If so, the focus may taken to be any of the following:

(11) (i) shirt;

(ii) a red shirt;

(iii) with a red shirt;

(iv) an ex-convict with a red shirt.

The sentence (10) presupposes, in any case, that something fulfills the sentence by taking the position of the focus. We may see this by examining natural denials of (10). Corresponding to each of the possible foci in (11) we might deny (10) by saying,

(12) (i) No, he was warned to look out for an ex-convict with a red TIE.

(ii) No, he was warned to look out for an ex-convict with a CARNATION.

(iii) No, he was warned to look out for an ex-convict wearing DUNGAREES.

(iv) No, he was warned to look out for an AUTOMOBILE salesman.

In each case, the denial, like the assertion, (10), holds for some value in the place of the focus. We may see clearly that it is really the focus playing this role by looking at natural shortenings of (12). These would be,

(13) (i) No, a red TIE.

(ii) No, with a CARNATION.

(iii) No, an ex-convict wearing DUNGAREES.

(iv) No, for an AUTOMOBILE salesman.

In each case, what is given in the denials, (13), is only the segment prior to the assumed focus and a new choice for the focus. The fact that these short forms of denials are easily and naturally understood suggests that we assume that denial must only be of the proper object or word for the focus of an assertion. The reiteration of the segment prior to the new phrase merely serves to demonstrate the assumed focus.

We may observe a similar sort of explanation of presuppositions of sentences which do not have the sort of nested surface structure of (10)[11]. Sentences which contain a nesting only in the semantic representation have similar presuppositions. Recall our analysis for the semantic representation of (5i); namely, (5ii). If we continue to assume this is a correct analysis, we can easily explain the presuppositions of (5i). Using the same method as above, let us examine natural denials of (5i). These are,

(14) (i) No, John killed the boy, unintentionally.

(ii) No, John caused the boy to die, through inaction.

(iii) No, John did not cause the boy to die.

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[11] 11. Chomsky reads the structure of (10) as,

(10') It was (an ex-convict (with (a red (shirt)))) that he was warned to look out for.

(iv) No such thing happened (i.e. the boy is alive).

The first three of these deny a particular element of the compositional lexeme [murder]. The elements of the lexeme must be denied in a specific order, so that denial of a less nested element entails denial of a more nested one. Hence, any denial of (5i) specifies a particular level of nesting at which the denial occurs, while presupposing the other elements of the lexeme, which are less nested, to hold. We should note that (14iv) is something of an anomaly here. It denies a presupposition of (5i) which is not expressed in our semantic representation (5ii). We shall not explore how to handle this presupposition, except to suggest that the lexeme [cause-to-die] might not, itself, be primitive. Rather, insertion of this lexeme may cause the semantic representation to take the form, '(5ii)'—[The—Boy—Is—Dead].

2.1.1.7 Category agreement.

We shall now show how Chomsky's modelling deals with categorical agreement. Chomsky points out that the examples such as (15) are anomalous compared with (16).

(15) (i) the boy may frighten sincerity;

(ii) sincerity may admire the boy;

(iii) John amazed the injustice of that decision;

(iv) the boy elapsed;

(v) the boy was abundant;

(vi) the harvest was clever to agree;

(vii) John is owning a house.

(16) (i) sincerity may frighten the boy;

(ii) the boy may admire sincerity;

(iii) the injustice of that decision amazed John;

(iv) a week elapsed;

(v) the harvest was abundant;

(vi) the boy was clever to agree;

(vii) John owns a house.[12]

However, the anomalies of (15) are not the same as purely syntactic anomalies such as (17).

(17) (i) sincerity frighten may boy the;

(ii) boy the frighten may sincerity;

(iii) injustice the of that John amazed decision;

(iv) elapsed week a.

Chomsky suggests that this difference may be explained by distinguishing between the syntactic anomalies of the sort in (17) and *semantic* anomalies of the sort in (15). This difference may be spelled out as follows. The sentences (or strings, rather) in (17) are already ruled out before the stage P_{h+1} of lexical insertion. For example, the P_h of (17i) would be of the form,

'Noun—Verb—Auxiliary Verb—Noun—Article',

which cannot be generated by any Z for English. However, the anomalies of (15) are presumed to occur only subsequent to the stage of lexical insertion. So while the P_h of (15i),

'Article—Noun—Auxiliary Verb—Verb—Noun',

is perfectly allowable, something is wrong with the particular choice of lexical insertion.

We shall find that the particular problem that arises subsequent to the lexical insertion in the sequence for the generation of the examples in (15) is lack of category agreement. Chomsky lists some of the categories with which we shall be concerned with,

> “The N *boy* is a Count Noun (as distinct from the Mass Noun *butter* and the Abstract Noun *sincerity*) and a Common Noun (as distinct from the Proper Noun *John* and the Pronoun *it*); it is, furthermore, an Animate Noun (as distinct from *book*) and a Human Noun (as distinct from *bee*); *frighten* is a Transitive Verb (as distinct from *occur*), and one that does not freely permit Object deletion (as distinct from *read*, *eat*); it takes Progressive Aspect freely (as distinct from *know, own*); it allows Abstract Subjects (as distinct from *eat, admire*) and Human Objects (as distinct from *read, wear*) (ATS, p.75).”

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[12] 12. The examples are from *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*.

Probably, the easiest way to handle category agreement is to assume that the categories mentioned by Chomsky, and perhaps a few others, are primitive semantic items which are attached to every lexeme. These categories, like other compositional elements of lexemes, are attached in a particular order. Hence it might be that every noun is either a Count Noun, Mass Noun, or Abstract Noun; amongst Count Nouns there are Animate Nouns and Inanimate Nouns; amongst Animate Nouns the feature Human Noun is either present of absent. For example, the lexeme [boy] might have the compositional form [male, child—[Count—[Animate—[Human]]]]. The lexeme frighten might have the compositional form, [frighten—[Animate-object]]. The lexeme [sincerity] might be expanded to [sincerity—[Abstract]]. After compositional lexemes are inserted into a syntactic structure, we, as above, make certain transformations to arrive at the semantic representation. Hence if we assume the P_h form of (15i) to be,

(18) 'Article—Noun—Auxiliary Verb—Verb—Noun';

this will give us the P_{h+1} form, after lexical insertion, of,

(19) 'The—Male, Child, [Count [Animate ...]]—May—Frighten, [Animate-object]—Sincerity, [Abstract]'.

Performing the same type of transformation as above we might get a semantic representation of,

(20) [The—Male—May—Frighten—Sincerity—[It(subject)—Is—Child—[It(subject)—Is—Count—-[It(subject)—Is—Animate ...]]], [It(object)—Is—Animate], [It(object)—Is—Abstract]].

This might not be entirely clear, at first glance. We shall make a few remarks on the procedure used to produce it. The least nested portion of the semantic representation is merely the main compositional element of each lexeme in (19). The rest of the semantic representation is nested one level. This consists of the secondary elements of each lexeme, arranged in parallel fashion. That is, everything separated by commas within the same square brackets should be considered independent of order. We have arranged these secondary elements of each lexeme in the order in which the lexemes occur in the un-nested portion of the semantic representation. Within each secondary element of a particular lexeme, there may occur items with a greater degree of nesting. The anomaly of (15i) arises from the fact that both (21i) and (21ii) occur within the same square brackets in (20).

(21) (i) [It(object)—Is—Animate];

(ii) [It(object)—Is—Abstract].

(21i) and (21ii) arise as secondary elements of different lexemes, but are nonetheless present on the same level within the semantic representation (20). If a similar semantic representation for (16i) were worked out we would start with the same P_h form (18); however, the semantic representation would not contain contradictory elements (21i) and (21ii). Rather the semantic representation of (16i) would merely contain the feature (21i), repeated twice on the same level (or, if you like, a redundancy elimination transformation might occur prior to the semantic representation S).

We have not explained every sort of semantic analysis which can be performed with Chomsky's modelling. All we hope to have done is to provide a feel for how Chomsky can deal with some semantic explanation. This should be sufficient to understand our eventual rejection of semantic programs and the weakening of them performed by the authors to be discussed below.

2.2 Grice.

Among the several notions that Paul Grice raises in his examination, in numerous essays, of communication and conversation is one that shall particularly interest us. This notion is *implicature*. Implicature is unlike the classical logical notion of implication. Where we are said to *imply* something if it follows as a necessary consequence of something we have said, we *implicate* something which was already assumed before we started talking. We may not be aware of what is implied by what we say, but we are almost certainly already confident that what we implicate is so. Implicature may be thought of as the assumptions or beliefs that must exist for a given utterance to really make sense.

An example of implicature would help here. Grice gives us this answer to an inquiry about some person, C: “Oh [he is] quite well, I think; he likes his colleagues, and he hasn't been to prison yet (LC).” Such an answer is most peculiar if we do not have some relevant piece of background knowledge about C; or if we do not, at least, know something about the speaker's beliefs about some relevant topic. The answer would be less peculiar if we know, for example, that C's colleagues are 'really very unpleasant and treacherous people'; or that, at any rate, the speaker believes this. The question arises of what facts or assumptions get implicated, and in what circumstances. Grice gives us a fairly general account of this. This account is in Grice's *conversational maxims*.

2.2.1 Conversational maxims.

Grice's conversational maxims are “rules of conversation” which are both prescriptive and descriptive. They are prescriptive in the sense that we are expected to obey them, and generally subject to censure if we violate them without adequate reason. The maxims are descriptive in the plain sense that people do obey them most of the time, at least according to Grice. We shall not individually examine all the maxims, but we may as well present them all. The maxims are of four sorts, each divided into sub-maxims. They are as follows.

QUANTITY,

(1) Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange).

(2) Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

QUALITY — 'Try to make your contribution one that is true.'

(1) Do not say what you believe to be false.

(2) Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

RELATION — 'Be relevant.'

MANNER — 'Be perspicuous.'

(1) Avoid obscurity of expression.

(2) Avoid ambiguity.

(3) Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).

(4) Be orderly. (LC)

Grice does not claim that these are necessarily exhaustive.

2.2.2 Intentions.

Our purpose in presenting these maxims is to show how attributions of intentions figure into our interpretation of the force and meaning of utterances. The particular intentions which we often attribute are those in the conversational maxims; we generally assume that a speaker intends to fulfill the maxims. For example, the following pair is unexceptionable. Question: 'My car is out of gas, where may I get some?' Answer: 'There is a gas station around the corner.' The answerer may be said to implicate a number of things: that the gas station is open; that it has gas; etc. If, however, these are not true and this is known to the answerer we should say that she is, if not lying, being deceptive or uncooperative. This is because the answerer is presumed to be obeying the conversational maxims. She has not, let us say, told a literal untruth, but she may be violating some other maxims than those of quality. Chiefly, in this case, the answerer is violating the maxim of relation. What she has said is in no way relevant to the conversation at hand if she knows the gas station to be closed.

It is only understandable that the utterance 'there is a gas station around the corner' may be taken as meaning 'you may get gas at the gas station around the corner' if we assume the answerer to intend to obey the conversational maxims. The hearer of the utterance must go through a process, however unconscious, of figuring out what relevance this utterance has to the conversation, and what conversational goals, intentions and beliefs must exist in the speaker. The same process is also involved where the conversational maxims are not explicitly involved. Other maxims involve aesthetic, social, or moral restraints on our speech. For example, the maxim 'be polite' may lead to implicature in much the same manner as do the conversational maxims we listed. It is clear that we reconstruct intentions on all levels, and not merely those of broad rules of conversation. When someone slurs a word, or substitutes the "wrong" word, or uses ambiguous or unclear syntax, we make hypotheses about what it is they are intending to say. Some of this will come out in our discussion of both Austin and Davidson, below.

2.3 Austin.

Let us examine how J. L. Austin can be seen as speaking against a semantic, or at least a purely semantic, theory of language. The field of philosophy called speech-act theory, of which Austin is perhaps the progenitor, has as its main goal the explanation of that in language and speech which cannot be captured under the rubric of a semantic theory. That is: the meaning or force of speech which cannot be explained by sentence-meaning. The speech-act theorists believe this portion of the meaning of speech to be a major, if not overwhelming, part. Austin leads us to the meaning in speech which cannot be explained through sentence-meaning, in his *How to Do Things with Words*, through a discussion of *explicit performatives*[13]. Austin gives some examples of these explicit performatives.

> "I do (sc. take this woman to be my lawful wedded wife)' — as uttered in the course of the marriage ceremony.
>
> 'I name this ship the *Queen Elizabeth*' — as uttered when smashing the bottle against the stem.
>
> 'I give and bequeath my watch to my brother' — as occurring in a will.
>
> 'I bet you sixpence it will rain tomorrow.' (p.5)"

What Austin notices about these examples, and what we should notice, is at least twofold. The first point is that these performatives are not assertions about facts, despite their superficial structure. We

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[13] Explicit performatives are speech-acts in which the act being performed is named by the utterance by which the act is performed. These are to be opposed to *implicit performatives*, in which, although the same act may be performed, the act is not named. Examples of these might be the explicit performative, 'I make X a gift to you'; and the implicit performative, 'Here you go.' These might both be used for the purpose of making a gift, but only the first names the act performed.

shall go into this point below. The second issue to notice is that the force[14], and indeed the meaning, of these utterances depends a great deal upon the situation in which they are uttered. This is not the simple form of context dependence which exists, for example, with deictic elements. Rather, it is a situational dependence which involves intricate social conventions, intentions of speakers, and the interpretation of listeners. This situational dependence leads us to read Austin as demanding a properly pragmatic explanation of language.

2.3.1 Infelicities.

Austin points out that explicit performatives, as well as other performatives (we shall see later how broad a class these others are), are subject to what he calls *infelicities*. We shall not detail all of these and Austin's descriptions and comments about these. Rather we shall let it suffice to mention the three broad types of infelicities. These are:

> (1) there may not exist a conventional procedure to perform an action, or the procedure may not be used properly;
>
> (2) if a procedure exists it may not be carried out correctly or completely;
>
> (3) the action may not be accompanied by the appropriate intentions or emotions, or may not be followed by expected subsequent actions.

In all of these infelicities the normal action associated with the utterance is not carried out, and in addition, the utterance does not carry its normal force and meaning.

Austin points out that this is especially true of infelicities of the first and second sort. We may illustrate these in one example to clarify this. In the case mentioned above of the marriage ceremony, infelicities of either of the first two kinds void the action, and cause the utterance to carry a different force and meaning. An example of the first type of infelicity here, might occur during an

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[14] When we use 'force' in this discussion we are really intending to refer to the illocutionary act being performed by a given utterance. For simplicity we have left Austin's description of locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts out of our main text. In brief, the distinction is as follows. Locutionary acts are the issuing of certain sounds with the intent and possibility that they be taken as sounds in language. Illocutionary acts are acts which are accomplished by or in making a locutionary act. The prime examples of these are explicit performatives, in which “to say something is to do something.” Perlocutionary acts are acts which are achieved as consequences of performing a locutionary or illocutionary act. We may often think of these as achieved *by* performing the locutionary or illocutionary act, but not normally *in* performing the latter. In general, perlocutions are non-conventional, though, of course, no sharp line exists between conventional and non-conventional actions. Hence, our examples of forces may ease into perlocutions. In our discussion of force, we give examples of cases in which the force is other than the “normal” force of an utterance. By this it should be understood that a different illocution is being performed than that which is normally associated with the given utterance.

effort to wed a chimpanzee; of the second kind during a ceremony performed by an imposter of a judge. In neither case has the act of marriage been performed; the act which was, in fact, performed depends on a great many factors not given by our description. What is of greater interest here is that what was, in fact, *said* differs in these infelicities from what was said in the normal case. Hence we may normally *mean*, 'I do take this woman as my wife', when making the same utterance; with the force of marrying her. However, in the infelicitous cases this is not so. In our first case the meaning of the actual utterance may be of the sort, 'I consider the institution of marriage a mere mockery to start with'; and either have the force of criticizing the institution of marriage or of persuading the spectators of one's lunacy. In our second case, the meaning of the actual utterance may be, 'I should like to be married to this woman'; and carry the force of expressing interest in this marriage.

One could question the since in which the utterance, 'I do take this woman as my wife', could have the meanings ascribed above — or indeed, any meaning other than 'I do take this woman as my wife.' The sense in which this may happen is quite straightforward. If asked, 'what is the meaning/force of that utterance of yours', we often answer with the meanings and forces described above (or these sorts). Austin's program is largely to argue that there is utterance-meaning which is not captured by sentence-meaning, so it should not surprise us to see (in Austin) this notion of the literal meaning of utterances depending on the context of utterance. Of course, everyone would acknowledge that in some situations even literal meaning is context dependent. Some obvious cases of this are homonyms and ambiguous sentence structures. The speech-act theorist embraces a much wider range of utterances which have context dependent literal meaning.

Infelicities of the third sort may also change the force and meaning of an utterance, though perhaps not quite so broadly (or not always so broadly). Hence when we utter, 'I warn you not to walk near that bull', although it is penned and of no danger, we may be said to lack an emotion or intention appropriate to the normal issuance of this remark. The possible meaning and force which Austin would likely attribute to this case are as follows: the meaning is the same as in the normal case, namely 'I warn you . . .'; however, the force of the utterance may be thought of as something like trying to cause unnecessary fear in you. We may propose a reading of this utterance which changes not only the force of the normal case, but the meaning also. Hence perhaps, the meaning of the utterance may be, 'I make a joke about the danger of the bull'; and its force the making of a joke.

2.3.2

The examples and descriptions we have given are largely anecdotal, as they shall have to remain. However, we are now in the position to discuss how Austin's general approach to speech-act theory detracts from, if not undermines, the semantic projects which we have discussed above. For the case of extensional semantics, we have already pointed out some limits in the extent of explanation. Namely, performatives do not have truth values. Neither do performatives have verifications, conditions of warranted assertability, or corresponding possible worlds. In the last of these we gave a possible extensional explanation of a particular non-constative type of utterance; namely, commands or imperatives. We said that command could be explained by reference to the set of possible worlds in which they are carried out. While it may well be that commands are a particular sort of performative, this possible worlds extensional explanation clearly will not work for performatives in general. To take out well used example of uttering, 'I do' during a marriage ceremony, we may say that this utterance corresponds to the possible worlds in which we do, in fact, take this woman as our wife; but a cursory examination of the situation will reveal that these worlds are coextensive with the set of worlds in which we say 'I do'. To be a bit more particular, we may say that the former are coextensive with the worlds in which our utterance of 'I do' is, in Austin's term, “happy”. Either way, this explanation is trivial, if not absurd.

However, the problems which speech-act theory presents to extensional semantics run deeper that this. Extensional semantics does not even stand on firm ground as regards constative utterances. For Austin, constative utterances are only particular cases of performatives. Or more conservatively, since we do distinguish the two, both constative and performative utterances are kinds of illocutionary acts — in neither case can we restrict our concern, in evaluating either force or meaning, to the locutionary act alone[15]. Before we try to show the deep similarity between constative and performative utterances, it would be well to discuss a few of the varieties of performative utterances.

2.3.3 Performatives: implicit and explicit.

The first fact we should notice here is that performatives come in at least two varieties: explicit and implicit. Not all performatives have an explicit version, though presumably all have one or several implicit versions. For example, although such an explicit performative as, 'I promise I shall do X' has an implicit equivalent (at least as uttered in some situations) of 'I shall do X'; such implicit performatives as the insult 'You are scum!' have no explicit version. Austin points our correctly that such an explicit variation as, 'I insult you by calling you scum!', it has a meaning at all, has only the meaning of a constative in the habitual present.

Implicit performatives have a sort of ambiguity not found in explicit performatives. That is, implicit performatives may be equivalent to any one of a number of explicit performatives. Hence, when we say, 'That bull is dangerous', we may be warning, stating, asserting, venturing, joking, promising, expressing condolences, or any of a number of other things. Explicit performatives were not subject to quite this kind of ambiguity. While explicit performatives may be used with other meanings and forces than those normally associated with them, these other meanings, and especially forces, are not *conventionally* carried by these utterances. In our above outlandish, though by no means inconceivable, example of saying 'I do' to a chimpanzee in order tho criticize marriage, the

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[15] See the above footnote for a brief discussion of locutionary and illocutionary acts.

actual meaning and force carried by the utterance are non-conventionally carried. We should probably not make too much of this distinction, as it is not at all clear what conventions exist and which do not. However, it does at least seem true that the ambiguity described in implicit performatives is an ambiguity between several explicit versions; also some number of conventionally defined procedure which lack an explicit performative to perform may enter in the ambiguity.

2.3.4 Constative utterances.

Austin points out in Lecture XI, that constative utterances really share all the properties or performative ones, including the explicit/implicit division. Austin summarizes his earlier discussion of performatives.

> (1) [T]he performative should be doing something as opposed to just saying something; and
>
> (2) the performative is happy or unhappy as opposed to true or false. [i.e. it may either be free from infelicities or suffer from them] (p.132)

Constative utterances also have just these properties ascribed to performatives. To show this we need first point out that constatives have the same implicit/explicit division which performatives were shown to have. Some explicit versions of constative utterances are,

I state that P.
I assert that P.
I believe that P (in one sense).

and perhaps,

I argue that P.
I suggest that P.
I hold/find that P.

and others.

The first of these is generally taken as a paradigm case of constative utterance. We need not argue that some or all of the other examples are real constatives, as long as it is accepted that stating (explicitly) is constative. Austin has us consider this unexceptionable remark:

> "In saying that it was raining, I was not betting or arguing or warning: I was simply stating it as a fact (p.133)."

Austin continues with some similar examples.

> “In saying it was leading to unemployment, I was not warning or protesting: I was simply stating the facts (p.133).”

Or again, we are to compare

> I state that he did not do it.

with

> I argue that he did not do it,
> I suggest that he did not do it,
> I bet that he did not do it, etc.

All of these simple, and unexceptional, sentences put stating on exactly the same level are the various illocutionary act with which it is compared. In the latter comparison which we are asked to make, we are to notice that any of the sentences can equally well make explicit an utterance of, 'He did not do it.' We should not then suppose that the implicit constative, 'He did not do it' is any less on par with various performatives than the explicit with the explicit constative, 'I state that he did not do it.' We may see this be turning the issue on its head somewhat. We evaluate the latter explicit constative, and indeed such utterances as 'I think he did not do it', in just the same manner as we do the implicit constative; that is, by checking its truth, not by checking the action performed or the intentions of the speaker. Conversely, the implicit constative is no less performative than its explicit counterparts — whether these counterparts be so-called constative, or performative in our clearest sense.

We further notice the performative nature of constatives through an examination of infelicities which constatives suffer from. Having shown that some conventional action is carried out by making constative utterances (e.g. stating), if we can show that constatives suffer from all of our infelicities then we shall have shown them to be essentially a particular branch of performatives. The third sort of infelicity most obviously applies to constatives. Just as when promising we are expected to intend to perform the right subsequent actions, when stating we are expected to believe what we state and to intend to convey the right fact.

The first two sorts of infelicities, however, also apply to constatives. Austin gives a number of examples of cases where there is no convention to make a constative utterance, or where the convention is not carried out properly. One of these is in the problem raised by Strawson of presupposing. One sort of presupposition we can make is existential; however, there is no convention for imputing properties or traits to non-beings (or at least not a general convention — we do talk of unicorns and rational roots of 2, in some cases). We may explain the impropriety of saying 'The present King of France is bald' by pointing out that there is no convention to impute traits to non-beings. Much more generally, we are not always the right person, or in the right place, to state anything. Austin says,

> “Just as we often say, for example, 'You cannot order me', in the sense 'You have not the right to order me', which is equivalent to saying that your are not in the appropriate position to do so: so often there are things you cannot state — have no right to state — are not in a position to state. You *cannot* now state how many people there are in the next room; if you say 'There are fifty people in the next room', I can only regard you as guessing or conjecturing (p.137).”

Or again,

> “Just as sometimes we cannot appoint but only confirm an appointment already made, so sometimes we cannot state but only confirm a statement already made (p.137).”

These point to cases where constative acts can and cannot be carried out.

2.3.5 Truth and falsity.

One additional example will, we hope, suffice to show the breadth of the conventionality of constatives. This example concerns, in some way, the truth or falsity of constatives. Consider the statement, 'France is hexagonal.' Austin says of this, that one

> “can see what you mean by saying that it is true for certain intents and purposes. It is good enough for a top-ranking general, perhaps, but not for a geographer. 'Naturally it is pretty rough', we should say, 'and pretty good as a pretty rough statement'. But then someone says: 'But is it true of is it false? I don't mind whether it is rough or not; of course it's rough, but it has to be true or false — it's a statement isn't it?' How can one answer this question, whether it is true or false that France is hexagonal? It is just rough, and that is the right and final answer to the question (p.142).”

The point here is that the appropriateness of uttering, 'France is hexagonal' is entirely conventional and dependent on the context. This statement might be perfectly allowable in a grade school text, but a bad joke among geographers. This sort of utterance, in fact constatives in general, may suffer from infelicities of the second (or first?) kind anytime that the utterance does not conform to the guidelines for statements relevant to the situation of utterance. The relevant aspects of the utterance situation may not, however, always be obvious. Where we believe a certain sort of statement to be conventionally allowable, we can be quite wrong. This goes a little way toward explaining our earlier comment about the situational dependence of utterances upon social conventions, intentions of speakers, and interpretations of listeners.

2.3.6 Conclusions.

Having sketched Austin's program, let us make explicit how this program speaks against semantic theories, both extensional and intensional. Semantic theories, of either sort, insist that meanings are attached to sentences. Austin, to the contrary, points out that meanings are utterance specific, and dependent on the situation of utterance. Since, as we have said, extensional theories are generally theories of truth, Austin's program will be most poignant to these in its dealings with the notion of truth. We should first notice that every statement is firstly an act, and only derivatively true or false. Already here we shall have to admit that any semantic theory misses the force of an utterance, even if it manages to capture the meaning. If our theory of meaning is a theory of truth, then Austin's point, that even some constative utterances can only be 'pretty good' and not true, even further limits the explanatory range of our semantic theory. Secondly, we should notice that meaning (including literal truth or falsity) is not the sort of thing that tags onto sentences, but the sort of thing that tags onto utterances. Further, an utterance's meaning is carried by virtue of social conventions about utterance types. These utterance types correspond to the forces which may conventionally be carried by an utterance. If the same sentence is taken as or meant as one utterance type it can have one meaning — if taken as a different type, it has a different meaning. It turns out that, in a deep sense, any theory of meaning must be a theory of social conventions; and hence a pragmatic theory.

The same criticism is made of intensional theories. These theories also believe it possible to explain meaning without regard for social conventions[16]. We shall make some brief remarks here about how the specific topics explicated in our discussion of Chomsky demand pragmatic explanation. The first of these topics was synonymy and paraphrase. Just as we earlier said that many constatives are not really true or false but only 'pretty good' in some contexts, synonyms tend to be not true or false but only 'pretty good' in the right context. For most or all synonyms, the interchangibility of the pair is limited to certain contexts, both semantic and pragmatic. An example of synonyms where this is obvious is the two words, 'gentlemen' and 'guys'. Although, presumably, gentlemen and guys are the same people, we cannot always (or even usually) interchange the words in an actual utterance. When we open a formal address we might utter 'Gentlemen!' — and although these same men could well be called 'guys', we cannot open the address by saying 'Guys!' The converse might be true of trying to draw the attention of a group of friends in an informal situation.

We shall do no more than hint at it, but we believe that the differentiation of relations of degree tends to involve the situation of utterance. Hence two words said to differ in degree will be sometimes interchangeable, and other times not. Similarly, entailment is only conventionally carried. That is, even assuming that lexemes are compositional, as discussed, a denial of an assertion involving a compositional lexeme may turn out to be a denial of any one or several of the compositional elements — and which is a pragmatic matter. We have already mentioned presupposition briefly above, and shall not bother with any remarks on it here.

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[16] The conventions which are not considered by semantic theories are not, of course, those conventional semantic links which, on some accounts, define language itself. Rather, these neglected conventions are those which concern the performance of illocutions.

About category agreement we shall suggest that the unacceptability of the "semantic" anomalies mentioned can equally be explained as pragmatic anomalies. That is, just as some assertions were previously shown to lack a conventional procedure, there are no conventional illocutions associated with these "semantic" anomalies. This remark does not in any way explain the particular anomalies, but it hopefully does point out that there is no necessity that the anomalies be explained in semantic terms.

2.4 Davidson.

Donald Davidson ends his essay, "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs", with

> "[T]here is no such thing as a language. not if a language is anything like what many philosophers and linguists have supposed. There is therefore no such thing to be learned, mastered, or born with. We must give up the idea of a clearly defined shared structure which language-users acquire and then apply to cases (p.174)."

We may begin here. In particular, what many philosophers and linguists have supposed of language is, at least, the following three things. What Davidson here calls '*first meaning*' we might call 'linguistic meaning' or 'sentence-meaning'.

> "(1) First meaning is systematic. A competent speaker or interpreter is able to interpret utterances, his [sic] own or those of others, on the basis of the semantic properties of the parts, or words, in the utterance, and the structure of the utterance. For this to be possible, there must be systematic relations between the meanings of utterances.
>
> (2) First meanings are shared. For speaker and interpreter to communicate successfully and regularly, they must share a method of interpretation of the sort described in (1).
>
> (3) First meanings are governed by learned conventions or regularities. The systematic knowledge or competence of the speaker is learned in advance of occasions of interpretation and is conventional in character (p.161)."

If this reminds us of a figure from much earlier in this essay, namely Saussure, it probably should.

2.4.1 Prior theory and passing theory.

Davidson makes a distinction between *prior theory* and *passing theory*, which has some connection with the distinction between sentence-meaning and utterance-meaning. The connection is not, perhaps, as direct as we would like, but we shall try to find it nonetheless. Davidson explains his distinction,

> "For the hearer, the prior theory expresses how he is prepared in advance to interpret an utterance of the speaker, while the passing theory is how he *does* interpret the utterance. For the speaker, the prior theory is what he *believes* the interpreter's prior theory to be, while his passing theory is the theory he *intends* the interpreter to use (p.168)."

A first try at establishing the connection between prior/passing theory and sentence/utterance-meaning might be to claim that the prior theory applied to an utterance gives us the sentence-meaning; while the passing theory applied to the utterance gives us the utterance-meaning. We shall see that this is not quite right, but it captures just enough of the two distinctions to proceed with the claim in mind.

2.4.2 Malapropisms.

Our next point in order ought to be the motivation for Davidson's distinction between prior and passing theories, and so it shall be. Davidson begins his essay with a discussion of what may be an interesting topic, malapropisms. The very interesting, and peculiar, thing about malapropisms is that we can most often understand them. According to standard linguistic theories (semantic theories), this fact is inexplicable. If our theory is as in (1) - (3) and our semantic rules give the meaning 'a nice derangement of epitaphs' to Mrs. Malaprop's utterance of 'a nice derangement of epitaphs'; how do we understand her as meaning 'a nice arrangement of epithets'?[17] This is where the distinction between prior theory and passing theory comes in. Prior to conversing with Mrs. Malaprop we are prepared, and inclined, to take 'a nice derangement of epitaphs' as just that. However, once we have conversed with her, and it is clear that (as we say) “she cannot possibly mean that!”, we decide we would be better to interpret the good woman as meaning 'a nice arrangement of epithets.' This is all the more reinforced if an arrangement of epithets is a matter we believe Mrs. Malaprop to have an interest in discussing. Our latter interpretation is what Davidson calls a passing theory.

The former interpretation is what Davidson calls our prior theory, but this is not identical to the theory which determines sentence-meaning. This is because as we manage to make stereotypes about individuals or about groups, our prior theory about how these people are likely to talk changes. Hence, our prior theory in entering a conversation with one person may be quite a different matter than our prior theory regarding a second person. Sentence-meaning is something which floats somewhere around our collection of prior theories. Namely, it is the interpretation we would give (according to our prior theory) to an utterance by someone we have minimal knowledge (and more crucially, stereotypes) about. This is a broad step away from the kind of rigid systematicity of semantic rules which we see in traditional semantic theories. In fact, it reverses the order of precedence between sentence-meaning and utterance-meaning. That is: where semantic theories would explain utterance-meaning as, at most, some sort of derivation of sentence-meaning; Davidson explains sentence-meaning as a particular category of utterance-meaning (namely, uninformed interpretation).

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[17] This example is from Davidson's essay and, I guess, before that from a Sheridan character. The context should make it clear enough what is going on.

2.4.3 Language?

Let us turn back to the philosopher's characterizations of language given at the beginning of our discussion of Davidson. We claimed that the use of 'first meaning' could be translated 'sentence--meaning'; but now we can point out that this is not quite right. 'First meaning' must, rather, be taken as the meaning which is given us by our prior theory. If it were taken as 'sentence-meaning', the philosopher's characterizations would not explain *any* of what goes on in our actual interpretation of utterances, except in the sharply limited case of uninformed interpretation. That is, both prior theory and passing theory play some role in interpreting an utterance, but neither is fixed in the way that sentence-meaning is presumed to be fixed. But if we turn with this caveat to the three characterizations we shall find some new problems with these characterizations. Davidson criticizes the second characterization.

> “It is quite clear that in general the prior theory is neither shared by speaker and interpreter nor is it what we would normally call a language. For the prior theory has in it all the features special to the idiolect of the speaker that the interpreter is in a position to take into account before the utterance begins. One way to appreciate the difference between the prior theory and our ordinary idea of a person's language is to reflect on the fact that an interpreter must be expected to have quite different prior theories for different speakers (p.171).”

That is, there is no particular reason to suppose that speaker and hearer come into an interaction with the same prior theory. Either communication can be achieved by bringing the passing theories into line, with or without changing the prior theories correspondingly; or communication can fail to a great or small degree. However, we should be careful not to overestimate the degree of accurate theory necessary for communication. If the speaker and hearer share only a small part of the same theory (either prior or passing) they are likely to communicate a great deal — due to redundancy in ordinary speech, conversational cues, reconstruction of speaker intent, and numerous other such devices.

We have already shown the unacceptability of characterization (3), but we shall make this explicit. It was claimed that first meanings are governed by learned conventions, which are learned in advance of interpretation. We have pointed out that, in fact, first meanings are tailored to our stereotypes about individuals and groups — and not candidates for the semanticist's sentence-meaning. This does not really answer the question of whether these first meanings are conventional, because we have no clear sense of what conventions are and are not. All that we shall be able to do toward settling this issue is point out a couple properties that conventions might have. Conventions might need have a certain rather wide circulation — if so, then characterization (3) is false. Since prior theories are often differentiated down to the individual, a particular prior theory might only exist in one person's evaluation of one other; and this is a most narrow circulation. Conventions might be imposed by social pressure rather than deliberately chosen — if so, then again characterization (3) is false. While it is certainly possible that social pressures, formal or informal, may sometimes cause us to choose one prior theory over another, there is no reason that we know to suppose that this is the case as a rule. At very least it is an empirically contingent matter whether such pressures exist, or whether our prior theory (which amounts to stereotypes, at the end of the day) is purely an expression of preferences and cognitive processes.

2.4.4 Language revisited.

The denial of characterizations (2) and (3) has certainly put a crimp on our notion of there being a language. Davidson's arguments have, hopefully, shown that these two characterizations cannot really be true of anything, or at least anything which affects how we actually interpret real utterances. Davidson does say, however,

> “Perhaps we can give content to the idea of two people 'having the same language' by saying that they tend to converge on passing theories; degree or relative frequency of convergence would then be a measure of similarity of language (p.173).”

We find there is something to this, and shall discuss this notion in the final section of this paper. A better way of phrasing this, for our purposes, might be that two people are able to form the same stereotype. Hence, where Davidson says,

> “If we ask for a cup of coffee, direct a taxi driver, or order a crate of lemons, we may know so little about our intended interpreter that we can do no better than to assume he will interpret our speech along what we take to be standard lines (p.170);”

he is really thinking of some stereotype pattern which just anyone can be assumed to possess. “Standard lines” has much the same status as “language”; both say something (and nearly the same thing) about who can and will act on which stereotypes. Now we must notice that this matter of who has which stereotypes is a purely contingent one. Notice also that these matters are essentially characterization (1). To the degree there actually are standard lines and languages, characterization (1) holds. We raise some of these questions again in section 3, particularly the status of characterization (1).

3.0 Conclusion.

Several of the claims we made in our discussion of Davidson were empirically contingent, and so it would be well to see how “the facts” line up. The question which is most interesting to us, here, is that of whether there are languages and/or standard lines of interpretation — given the meaning of there “being languages” which we had Davidson give for us. Linguists have been considerably less sanguine about the existence of language than have philosophers — and as the former depend on the study of language for their livelihood to a greater degree than do the latter, we might pay them some attention. If we stop taking as brute that it is the existence of a single language which grounds each idiolect, we might well doubt that any language is actually emergent out of the potpourri of idiolects. We would like to point to a couple of quotes from linguists which may support Davidson's assertion that there is no such thing as a language.

3.0.1 Some “facts”.

In David Decamp's paper, “Introduction: The Study of Pidgin and Creole Languages”, he says,

> “. . . there is also a socio-economically oriented linguistic continuum in Jamaica, a continuous spectrum of speech varieties whose extremes are mutually unintelligible but which also includes all possible intermediate varieties. At one end of this continuum is the speech of highly-educated Jamaican leaders, many of whom claim to be speaking standard British English but who are actually using what seems to be evolving into a standard Jamaican English; it is mutually intelligible with but undeniably different from standard British. At the other extreme is the so called 'broad creole' or 'broken language', the variety which so far has recieved the most attention from linguists. Each Jamaican speaker commands a span on this continuum, the breadth of the span depending on the breadth of his [sic] social activities; a labor leader, for example, can command a greater span of varieties than can a sheltered housewife of the suburban middle class. A housewife may make a limited adjustment downward on the continuum in order to communicate with a market woman, and the market woman may adjust upward when she talks to the housewife. Each of them may then believe that she is speaking the other's language, for the myth still persists in Jamaica that there are only two varieties of language — standard English and 'the dialect' — but the fact is that the housewife's broadest dialect may be closer to the standard end of the spectrum than is the market woman's 'standard'.”

Lest we suggest that this arrangement of varieties of speech is strictly socio-economic let us use one other quote. After briefly rejecting mutual intelligibility as properly slicing up languages (e.g. the “languages” Norwegian and Swedish are mutually comprehensible) — and we shall come back to this suggestion — R. A. Hudson, in his book *Sociolinguistics*, says,

> “Varieties may be arranged in a *Dialect Continuum*, a chain of adjacent varieties in which each pair of adjacent varieties are mutually intelligible, but pairs taken from opposite ends of the chain are not. One such continuum is said to strech from Amsterdam through Germany to Vienna, and another from Paris to the south of Italy (p.36).”

It is not only recently that these linguistic transitions have been noticed. No less a figure than Saussure also discusses them. Not only does Saussure realize that dialect continuums exist[18] but he gives a precise explanation for them. Saussure talks of what he calls *innovating waves* — which are the process by which languages evolve. He says,

> “(1) Evolution takes the form of successive and precise innovations that include as many partial facts as could be enumerated, described, and classified according to their nature (phonetic, lexicological, morphological, morphological, syntactic, [for our interest, semantic], etc.).
>
> (2)Each innovation embraces a definite and delimited area. There are two possibilities: either the area of innovation embraces the whole territory and creates no dialectal differences (the less usual possibility), or the change affects only a part of the territory, each dialectal fact having its special zone (the more common occurence). (p.200)”

The consequence of a history of such innovations is a dialect continuum — the closer two groups are to one another, the more dialectal items they are likely to share. The sense of “close” here shold not be taken in the purely geographic terms which Saussure emphasizes, but should also be taken to include “closeness” in socio-economic factors, ethnicity, gender perhaps, and any number of other things. Two groups which are sufficiently close speak in mutually intelligible ways; and this is because they share enough stereotypes about “standard lines” of interpretation to come up with passable interpretations of each others' meanings.

3.0.2 Some claims.

We are, however, getting somewhat ahead of ourselves — as the quotes we have given are not really any more than anecdotal. What we are trying to show in our denial of language is that characterization (1), which we gave in our discussion of Davidson, is false. This characterization was, in brief, that language is systematic. More exactly, the characterization was that 'first meaning is systematic'. However, the claim — when taken as an empirical one — that there are languages amounts to the claim that there is a particular first meaning that just any speaker, within some specifiable group, can and does use. For us to claim that, ala Davidson, there is no such thing as a language we must be prepared to show that there is no first meaning which is within the repertoire of

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[18] There is no point in demonstrating that Saussure speaks of dialect continuums, in the main text; Saussure says almost exactly the same sort of thing as the other authors we quoted. However, to put the readers mind at ease we can give this example.

> “It is impossible, even in our hypothetical examples, to set up boundaries between dialects. The same applies to related languages. The size of the territory makes no difference. We would be unable to say where High German begins and Low German ends, and would find it just as impossible to draw the dividing line between German and Dutch, or between French and Italian. There are extreme points where we may assert, 'Here French predominates, here Italian,' but in the intermediate regions the distinction would disappear. (p.204)”

every speaker who we think speaks a given language. To do so is tantamount to showing that “language-groups” do not divide up speakers in any way which we would find at all acceptable; and to do this is, in turn, to cast doubt whether all, or any, speakers are speakers of a “language”. In terms of a more traditional epistemological question, we might ask whether languages are natural kinds. We ask here a number of different questions in different terminologies, which are nonetheless somehow equivalent — and all of which should be open to empirical evidence. Not all the notions used in the above family of assertions are entirely clear; hence, our effort will have to be to clarify these notions at the same time as we argue for the assertions involving them. We should therefore be prepared to revise the notions at the same time as we check the assertions. Most of this project shall not be within the bounds of this paper. Our only goal in the remainder of this paper is to suggest that the family of assertions above warrant methodological pursuit, and that some of the concepts involved are likely to be fruitful.

3.1 Once again: language?

In the speech communities sketched in the above quotes, there seems no natural way to delimit the number of languages spoken. Turning to the Jamaican case we notice that “standard” Jamaican is intelligible by “standard” British speakers, the latter by midwest Americans, and these in turn by some, but not all, African “English” speakers. We commented above that mutual intelligibility did not really work as a possible criterion of language membership — but it is closely tied with shared first meaning and linguistic stereotypes; any possible sense we might hope to make of “language” will be fairly closely related to mutual intelligibility. If we limit ourselves to those speakers in this sort of chain who are traditionally called “English speakers” (e.g. on your favorite language distribution map), we have still included a huge proportion of the world's speakers. If we further realize the banal fact that mutual intelligibility comes in degrees (often not symmetrically distributed in a conversational pair), the intelligibility relation forms a richly variegated topology on the universe of “English” speakers.

It seems reasonable to ask what the “English” language consists in, given the above remarks on mutual intelligibility. What linguistic stereotypes do all English speakers share? What first meaning(s) can every English speaker resort to as “standard lines”? One presumes that a language must be, in essence, a grammar combined with a lexicon — and this is consistent with the semanticists we have discussed: Saussure, and particularly Chomsky. Let us focus on the lexicon, though we do not think that any principled difference exists in the grammar (although grammar is more resistant to the kind of innovating waves described by Saussure, so somewhat greater homogeneity may exist between “distant” speakers). Unless we make cultural imperialism a linguistic principle, we cannot assume that, for example, the O.E.D. has the last word on membership in the lexicon of “English”. Actually, even if we are cultural imperialists, this proposal will not help us if our effort is descriptive linguistics. We could claim that the O.E.D. gives the prior theory that one *should* use when entering a discourse (with the right sort of person — namely, one we don't know), but this still says nothing about the standard lines that speakers *do* use in such encounters. As a matter of the facts, different speakers use the same words (i.e. sounds, phonetic/phonemic strings) to convey different semantic values, and this is true even of the circumstance where we are talking to persons about whom we have few or no stereotypes. Further, one speaker will often choose different prior theories, of different standard lines, for different occasions of speech encounters; in particular, this is not only because of the stereotypes we bring to an encounter, but because of completely extraneous factors such as our mood, our other recent encounters, our conversational goals, and others. We doubt that any one semantic value can be singled out as belonging to "English"; particularly given that nearly any such value will never be used, nor understood, by some groups of (or individual) "English" speakers.

3.2 A re-examination.

Once we examine the actual links that people make in concrete situations, between lexical items and semantic values we are compelled away, even, from Davidson's prior theory to his passing theory. That is, while we cannot really argue against a prior theory framework on theoretical or empirical grounds, we think the idea of a prior theory to be largely superfluous. If we break down the line of analysis of speech (and interpretation) which we have been developing, we describe speech (and interpretation) as follows. A person enters a conversational context with only her linguistic stereotypes (about groups or individuals), knowledge of conventions, conversational goals, and hypothoses about other's goals, intentions, beliefs and so on. She does not gain anything else while in a conversation. Our goals and our hypothoses about other's goals were discussed during our discussion of Grice; conventions during the discussion of Austin; and linguistic stereotypes during the discussion of Davidson. In the latter, we made a distinction between prior theory and passing theory, which divided the stereotypes we make into two groups. However, this now seems like a distinction without a difference. The two groups do not divide stereotypes into different kinds, but only into those we have with our mouths open and those we have with our mouths shut. Hence we will, from this point, not bother with Davidson's distinction, but only speak of linguistic stereotypes. These stereotypes are of two general sorts — the same categories which language was presumed to have — stereotypes about lexical/semantic (signifier/signified) links, and stereotypes about grammaticality.

3.2.1 Chomsky revisited.

It is here that we are able to make some remarks about Chomsky's notion of syntax, and to a degree about his ideas of semantics. Chomsky presumes that we have syntax and semantics generators in our brains. These are recursive machines which are able to generate the infinite number of sentences which we can produce and understand. While we cannot really understand or produce an infinite number of sentences, we can see the sense in Chomsky claiming we can. There is no clearly defined upperbound on the length of sentences. Any upperbound we might give — such as, "the longest string of phonemes utterable in 72 years" — probably gives us more different sentences than our brains could hold by rote enumeration. Hence, there is reason to think that we do utilize recursive rules for the generation of sentences. However, there is no immediate reason to suppose that each person uses the same recursive rules, or that a single person sticks to the same set of rules from utterance to utterance. We shall, in fact, propose that sets of rules are as common as are linguistic stereotypes. More strongly, we shall claim that our stereotypes of grammaticality are just simply sets of recursive rules. When we enter into a discourse situation we bring the set of recursive rules of grammaticality, which we believe the other to hold, into our interpretation and construction, just as we bring in our stereotypes about the other's lexical/semantic links. Chomsky's mistake, on this picture, is exactly the same as absolutely any other semanticist — he believes we have just one set of rules for interpreting or creating utterances.

3.2.2 Stereotypes.

Let us turn back to the discussion of stereotypes, perhaps it will be illuminating. Lexical items (and recursive rules) are distributed by idiolect, and by register. This latter may be understood as the speech situation, thought of in broad terms such as formal/informal, authoritative/subordinate, solidarity/distance, etc. We might conceivably enumerate the elements of register. Let us call a particular speaker's idiolect in a particular register at a particular time the *“utterance-context”*. We prefer this condensation of speaker and situation into a single variable (though a multi-dimensional one), because we concur with Vološinov in thinking the person of a speaker to be no different in kind from the other situations encompassing utterances. It seems to be empirically true that lexical/semantic links and recursive rlues of grammar, while somewhat systematic, are not common to all utterance-contexts (or most even), even within fairly narrow social groups. A particualar string of phones/phonemes is used and understood one way by one class, in one region, and using one register — and differently elsewhere. Class, region, and register are often dividing lines for different uses of a sound, but none of these are often sharply divided.

It is usually the case that we are unsure about the semantic values and recursive rules, to a greater or lesser degree, used by others in our conversations. Symmetrically, we are often unsure how our lexicon and syntax will be taken. Often, prior to a conversation we call to mind stereotypes of the other's likely lexical/semantic connections, based on her appearance, demeanor, and dress. In all cases, we draw these stereotypes once engaged in conversation. The other's accent, lexical choice, and grammar lead us to further stereotypes about her class, region, register, etc. — which we use to determine her likely semantic values and intended syntax. We also use all the above items to develop a Gricean “passing theory” about our partner's likely appraisal of our own class, region and register. Insofar as there is such a thing as a “standard” language, both parties may choose the register in their repertoires which most nearly conform to the “standard”. What makes one set of lexical/semantic connection (or recursive rule) “standard” in not the ontological status of languages, it is actual historical facts about invasions, immigrations, and power-structures in societies.

This ability to form stereotypes largely accounts for the success and failure of mutual intelligibility. In DeCamp's description of Jamaica above, this is well illustrated. The housewife and market woman are able to communicate just insofar as they form reasonably good stereotypes of one anothers' lexical/semantic connections and recursive rules (although they may yet believe their stereotypes to be much better than they actually are). These stereotypes may be available to whatever degree for a listener. If the author personally hears a Japanes speaker, he will not make any lexical/semantic connections; if he hears a Russian or Chicano he will make a few (though not many); if he hears a Jamaican creole speaker he will have more correct stereotypes; if he hears an American midwesterner, most all the stereotypes will fit. A passing thought here is that it might be easier to define languages by mutual unintelligibility than by mutual intelligibility. That is, two speakers may be said to “share a language” if they are both incomprehensible by most all the same people. This shall not be pursued herein, but neither is it quite a joke.

3.2.3 Semantics, grammar and pragmatics.

We can see that the framework of families of inter-related semantic values and recursive rules of grammaticality bring us much closer to a pragmatic theory than to a semantic one. We should also notice that stereotypes are no more pre-given than are languages. That is, it is not merely that we know some large number of languages before entering a discourse situation; and then merely try to choose the right one. Rather it is that, just as new sentences can be generated, so can new stereotypes. The Soviet semiotician Yuri Lotman, in his essay “Problems in the Typology of Texts”, nicely captures something like the picture we are aiming for — albeit his concern is for the written, not the spoken word.

> “Our reasoning is not constructed thus, 'Pragmatics, not semantics and syntax determines the character of the text,' but thus: 'A change in the function of a text gives it a new semantics and a new syntax (p.120).”

Lotman's concern is admittedly somewhat different than ours, and so is his terminology. We should best understand, for our purposes, 'text' as 'sentence' or 'sound' (i.e. that which stays fixed); and 'function' as 'utterance-context'. This is not rewriting the whole intention of Lotman's assertion, but merely shifting the concern from writing to speech. We shall show below that Lotman is most sympathetic with our program.

3.3 Conventions and intentions.

Stereotypes, for all the work they do, are not the whole of our explanation of speech and interpretation. At least two other sorts of factors enter in. The first is conventions; the second is intentions. We have been and remain very uncomfortable about talk of conventions, as it is enormously less that clear what conventions are and which conventions exist. However, there is work to be done which cannot be done with stereotypes alone. This work concerns speech-acts. Although our knowledge of conventions is not, perhaps, sharply divided off from the stereotypes we have — the paradigm cases of each play distinctly different roles. The conventions we are aware of are of what *acts* can be performed by saying things. Our stereotypes are still, as our quote from Lotman brought our, contextualized semantic theories. Our discussion of Austin should, hopefully, have brought out semantic theories' inability to deal with speech-acts. When we say, 'I do take this woman', no possible values we can give to the individual lexical items, and no set of recursive rules we can use to explain the composition, can explain the meaning or force of the utterance, *unless we know that there is a conventional procedure to become married*, and that this is it. In some sense, our explanation of speech and interpretation in terms of stereotypes (however much it departed from traditional semantic theories) is still a semantic theory. We shall not reject this semantic theory, though we shall reject any semantic theory which does not demand *radical* contextualization. However, we do claim that a pragmatic theory of speech-acts is necessary on top of our “semantic” theory of stereotypes.

3.3.1 Conventions.

Our pragmatic theory, though, must take precedence over our “semantic” theory. Recall from our discussion of Vološinov,

> “[T]he criterion of linguistic correctness is submerged by a purely ideological criterion: an utterance's correctness is eclipsed by its truthfulness or falsity, its poeticalness or banality, . . . [whether it is] good or bad, important or unimportant, pleasant or unpleasant, and so on.”

There are conventions that we say things which are true rather than false (for the particular context of utterance); which are important rather than unimportant; which are pleasant rather than unpleasant; and similarly, which are contextually grammatical rather than ungrammatical. Each of these convention is, or course, breakable and often broken. At the same time, we know that if we break these conventions we are subject to censure of a more or less conventional nature, which depends largely on more or less enumerable aspects of the utterance-context (and do not forget that utterance-context includes the person of the speaker). Since contextual grammaticality can be included in these categorical conventions without any strain on the framework, it must be subsumed under our pragmatic theory. We have already stated that stereotypes, like utterances, must be recursively generable. When we claim that there are conventions (pragmatic objects) about which arrays of stereotypes to bring to a particular utterance-context, it follows in an immediate fashion that parts of our pragmatic theory must include rules of recursive generation. Whether we include the actual rules for generation of sentences in our pragmatic theory, or only include the rules for generating new patterns of stereotypes is of little or no matter.

3.3.2 Intentions.

In addition to stereotypes and conventions, the process of speech and interpretation involves intentions, in various ways. These are the Gricean kinds of cases. While Grice's conversational rules are indeed conventions of a certain sort, saying this does not quite go far enough toward explaining actual utterances. The thing that is left out is the interpretation we actually end up with from assuming that speakers are obeying these conversational rules. So for example, when we respond to 'Where can I get some petrol?' with 'There is a gas station around the corner,' we must presume certain intentions to understand the interchange. The meaning which we should like to assign to the latter utterance is of the sort, 'You may get petrol around the corner.' The linguistic stereotypes we have of the utterance (imagine an actual circumstance) are not likely to give us this meaning. Neither are there conventions specific enough to direct us to this meaning. It is conventional to give responses to questions, and to tell truths rather than falsities, and so on. But none of these are specific enough to determine the actual meaning being given to the utterance above, unless we supplement our understanding by certain assumptions about the intentions of the speaker. This point was, hopefully brought out in our discussion of Grice. Hence, we shall let this mention of it suffice herein.

3.4 Lotman.

Lotman, whom we have already mentioned in passing, is interested in the abstract study of information. While speaking is clearly not entirely a matter of transmitting information, this element does figure in. Almost as a postscript we wish to consider whether the consideration of language in information-theoretic terms will lead us to the same framework we reached by other means. The information which is of interest to Lotman is not only of the world outside the communicative act, but information about the communicative act itself. If we reflect just briefly on the processes of actual speech we will realized that communication about communicative acts is a large part of our total communication.[19]

3.4.1 Sameness and difference.

When we are concerned with communication about communicative acts we are, according to Lotman, driven to an explanation in terms of an opposition between sameness and difference of code. This is a structural opposition, which should remind us of the negative definition of signifiers and signifieds which we saw in Saussure. However, Lotman is not concerned with the individual elements in communication, but with communicative systems as a whole — what we would call 'stereotypes' or 'systems of stereotypes'. Lotman makes these remarks about the play between sameness and difference of code.

> “Let us imagine two human individuals who still exchange not signs but irregular signals that are involuntary symptoms of their psycho-physiological processes. The common character of some elementary codes of the 'fear-pleasure' type and the common character of their

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[19] As an example of the importance of communication about communication we can point to Austin's estimate that there are names of speech-acts of a number in the order of 10^3. If the vocabulary of English is about 200,000 words, then this means that anywhere up to 5% of our lexicon may be names of communicative acts. This is certainly an important portion. It is, of course, unclear with this information alone how much of our actual speech is about communicative acts. But this is also probably of at least the same order.

> surrounding situation, which is deciphered by this code set, allow them to distinguish a common feature in mutual signals that they qualify as 'intelligible.' The possibility arises of the equivalent exchange of identical meanings."

This is the sameness aspect of code. Lotman continues.

> "However, while the mechanism from which the system of semiotic communication can develop is present here, the content for exchange within it is theoretically not provided. A participant in communication is operative for me presicely because he is 'another person,' and the information obtained from him is valuable precisely insofar as it issues from another person and does not duplicate what is already known to me. To the extent that participants in communication are united by a common code, they are one person. (both p.95)"

This is the difference aspect of code.

3.4.2 Code and content.

Before we proceed to Lotman's remarks on the precise opposition between these, we need to explain parts of the above quotes. Lotman, following his compatriate Vološinov, does not wish to distinguish code and content in natural language — at least not in the simplistic way which analytic semantics would. For Vološinov, as we saw, this follows from the absolute semioticity of thought. Every thought and every perception is already a semiotic object when it is presented, and does not have a pre-semiotic "content". For Lotman it is the same; any information we have in our brains is not merely passively realized in an objective code, but is the code itself. Hence, two persons who are not identical in the information they contain think in different systems of code.

A problem arises as to how information can be conveyed between two persons with different systems of code (but yet it is only those with different systems of code who have any information *to* convey). Lotman describes the situations of similarity and difference of code.

> "Thus two semiotic situations are inherently given: in one situation, the mechanism of communication is inherently given, but the content of communication is theoretically absent; in the other situation, the content of communication is inherently given, but the mechanism of communication is theoretically absent. It is apparent that real speech can be assessed as a compromise and oscillation between these systems (p.96)"

This oscillation and compromise appears at a synchronic level as an "inherent structural tension" in the pattern of communication. However, at a diachronic level the structural tension plays a functional role in the maintenence of societies. Let us examine the opposition of sameness and difference at a diachronic level.

3.4.3 Diachrony.

Saussure has rightly pointed out that there is a tendency toward sameness of language. We explained this in terms of the desirability of communication, and the rational method of maximizing it, and so on. Our explanation was undoubtedly much too intentional. Persons are not nearly so rational as our discussion suggested; which is not to say that there is not a societal movement towards standardization of language: there is! Saussure should be excused from the blame for this intentionalism, as it was only our heuristic in explaining the tendency he observed. However, what Saussure observed was only half of the picture. There is also a tendency toward individualization of language. Lotman says this.

> “The development of a linguistic system brings about an ever greater individualization of language. This is linked to the fact that the personality of both speaker and hearer become increasingly complex in the course of cultural evolution. There is seldom growth in the number of semiotic systems with which each person encodes his [sic] speech behavior. But the number of possible combinations of linguistic codes eventually exceeds the number of members in the collective; that is, it becomes individual. (p.97)”

We should not take too seriously Lotman's implicit claim that there was some aboriginal society in which codes were not as common as individuals. Russian linguists and philosophers since Marr have taken their metaphors about the origins of language much too seriously. Nonetheless, Lotman suggests how real historical people do become differentiated in their semiotic systems.

These two opposing tendencies, for codes to differentiate and to generalize, play a functional role in societies. This we have said. It would be premature to claim that this functional role actually explains the tendencies; so we shall offer it only as a suggestion, not an assertion. The function that similarity of code plays in society is the obvious one of allowing communication. The function of differentiation of code is as follows.

> “Specialization in the structure of individual codes — the possibility of a purely personal representation in text of extralinguistic reality — meets deep needs of the collective as a whole, since a shortage of information typical of any human collective can most effectively be compensated for by the stereoscopic quality, polyglottism, and multi-level character of specialization. (p.97)”

The specialization mentioned here is analogous to what Hilary Putnam calls “division of linguistic labor”. That is, different people are allowed the final word on different linguistic matters. The 'stereoscopic quality' Lotman mentions here is merely the greater effectiveness which a multiplicity of perspectives brings do deciding an issue — whether it be one of truth, morality, beauty, appropriateness, or whatever.

3.4.4 Language concluded.

The diachronic perspective suggested above allows us one final chance to conceptualize what language could be, and what it could not be. A language could be a synchronic slice of a group of humans, in which the tendency toward commonality of code is predominant. Whether such slices exist is an empirical matter, as have been the other suggestions we have made about what languages might be. This account is in keeping with our conceptions in terms of stereotypes, and common prior theories, and mutual intelligibility. However, this perspective allows us to see something which the others have not. If languages exist in particular places at particular times this is an entirely accidental fact. Nothing within language (on any of our accounts) causes languages to reproduce themselves. Only particular social facts, of a non-linguistic nature, could have the effect of reproducing language. In particular, for a language to be a lasting entity there would have to be some outside pressure for the conformity of linguistic codes. We conjecture that this would have to be the result of a most peculiar functional demand of a society.

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