Manuel García-Carpintero and **Max Kölbel (eds.)**
The Continuum Companion to the Philosophy of Language.
London and New York: Continuum 2012.
304 pages
$190.00 (Hardcover ISBN 9780826444066)

Gillian Russell and **Delia Graff Fara (eds.)**
The Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Language.
New York and London: Routledge 2012.
924 pages
$225.00 (Hardcover ISBN 9780415993104)

Recent years have seen several major encyclopedic publications devoted to philosophy of language. After the success of Pergamon's *Concise Encyclopedia of Philosophy of Language* (1997), Blackwell's *Companion to the Philosophy of Language* (1997) and *Guide to the Philosophy of Language* (2006), and the *Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Language* (2006), Routledge and Continuum have published their own compendia. The organizational and methodological principles of the two books are different. Whereas *The Continuum Companion* (*CCPL*) provides nine comprehensive essays (and an editorial introduction, and conclusion on recent developments and new directions), *The Routledge Companion* (*RCPL*) comprises 68 shorter chapters organized into seven main sections. Those differences make the two volumes complementary to one another in a very interesting way.

CCPL starts with an editorial introduction in which Manuel García-Carpintero traces the main issues in the history of the philosophy of language, focusing on the achievement of Frege, Russell, and especially Wittgenstein. In García-Carpintero's view 'the core issues in the philosophy of language are first put forth with compelling self-conscious depth in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*' (1) and 'it was in the *Tractatus* that the proper dimensions and interconnections of the main problems confronted afterwards in the discipline are clearly envisaged for the first time' (2). According to the editor, the contemporary themes stemming from the work of Frege, Russell, and the *Tractatus*, include reference, meaning and modality, problems of compositionality, and the relations between semantics and pragmatics; all discussed in the forthcoming chapters. The introduction concludes with an overview of research methods in the philosophy of language, and crucially the role of intuitions.

James Higginbotham's chapter provides an introduction to 'the nature of language', concentrating on the abstract character of language, its relation to human cognition, and the nature of the language faculty. The discussion refers to the research by Zellig Harris and early Chomskyan generative-transformational grammar. In the conclusion, Higginbotham expresses his hope 'to have imparted one sense in which "figuring out how language works" is a complex undertaking, and for many an exciting journey aimed at mapping one feature of the anatomy of the human mind' (43). The following chapters offer further insights in this exciting journey.

Josh Dever looks at formal semantics understood as 'the attempt to give precise accounts of the relation between syntactic structures and semantic values, typically while making use of tools from mathematics and logic' (49). He introduces the basic ideas of possible worlds semantics, the issues of modality, belief contexts, quantified noun phrases, scope ambiguities, and type-theoretic semantics. Dever observes that constructing a comprehensive formal theory of meaning is an

extraordinarily difficult task, but one which is 'both essential to a full understanding of human linguistic exchanges and which promises to reveal many unexpected features of our intricate linguistic tools' (80). This last point is especially important, as it stresses not only the descriptive, but also the explanatory potential of formal approaches, and provides a natural continuation to important topics introduced in Higginbotham's chapter.

Kathrin Glüer investigates theories of meaning and truth conditions. Since the author considers truth the basic semantic concept, she provides an overview of philosophical meaning theories, especially Davidson's approach to semantics and truth-conditional semantics, and also briefly mentions the earlier work of Grice and Strawson. Other concepts discussed in this chapter include intensionality and indeterminacy, and the relation between meaning and understanding, with reference to the work of Dummett (where Glüer mentions the possibility of disputing the claims made by the late philosopher in connection with the limits of truth-conditional semantics).

Genoveva Martí discusses another topic crucial for investigating meaning, namely reference. The fundamental question for the theory of reference is the following one: 'What makes it possible for a word to represent an object, so that something, true or false, can be said about it?' (106). In this chapter Martí presents various approaches to proper names (from Frege, through Kripke, Donnellan, Dummett and Kaplan, to most recent investigations of experimental data), discusses the motivations for different theories and their shortcomings. She reports the results of an experiment (carried by Eduard Machery et al.) which seems to show that the choice between the descriptivist account of reference and the causal-historical one might be culturally conditioned; she also notes that independently of the relevance of these results 'the discussion around the use of experiments in the theory of reference has opened up a debate about (…) the empirical evidence on which the theory of reference and, in general, the theory of meaning is supposed to rely on' (121). One minor critical note: this is the only chapter with references (rather unnecessarily) incorporated into the endnotes.

Michael Nelson discusses intensional contexts. He opens the chapter with a rather technical investigation of extensionalism in classical quantificational logic, demonstrates the inadequacy of extensionalism, and hence the need for an intensional language and logic. Further discussion is illustrated with different analyses of one type of intensional context: propositional attitude constructions. In this exposition Nelson assumes a structural version of propositionalism, i.e. an assumption that sentences 'express propositions in virtue of which they are true or false and propositions are the contents of cognitive (and some conative) attitudes' (128), and that propositions have a structure, 'much like the syntactic structure of the sentence that expresses them' (130). Further on he discusses Frege's puzzle (or rather several versions of the original formulation), and different solutions to the puzzle.

Kent Bach focuses on context dependence in language and its use. Context-sensitivity follows from the fact that the 'standing meanings' of certain terms 'determine their contents as a function of contexts of their use' (155). The chapter focuses on different types of indexicals, terms with missing complements and different relational terms. Further on Bach also discusses gradable, relative and absolute adjectives, and predicates of personal taste. The discussion shows different dimensions and linguistic realizations of context-sensitivity. Bach concludes observing that '[i]t takes a lot to show that expressions of a given type are context-sensitive. It is not enough to point out that what a speaker means when using the expression can be different in different contexts. It has to be the content of the expression itself that varies, and it has to be the context, in a way

determined by the meaning of the expression, that makes the difference' (178). Apart from a comprehensive list of references this chapter also includes a brief thematic guide to further reading.

François Recanati provides a concise overview of research topics within pragmatics. This chapter is a perfect introductory guide to a very lively field of philosophical and linguistic research. It briefly traces the development of the field, pointing to the origins of contemporary pragmatics in the work of Austin, Strawson, Grice and the second Wittgenstein. Among the family of topics connected with pragmatic research Recanati mentions speech acts, contextual implications, conversational implicatures, non-truth-conditional aspects of meaning, indexicals, contextual and propositional attitudes, presupposition, context and context-change and the inferential model of communication; he also focuses on levels of meaning, and the semantics/pragmatics distinction, noting that 'the "border wars" over the semantics/pragmatics interface are often suspected of being verbal disputes' (194).

José Zalabardo tackles the issue of semantic normativity and naturalism. He starts with presenting Kripke's normativity argument, moves on to discuss the naturalistic fallacy and the normativity of linguistic meaning, and investigates the normativity of mental content. This discussion points to the strong relations between philosophy of language and philosophy of mind, and shows the importance of different semantic analyses for contemporary research in ethics.

Albert Casullo discusses analyticity, apriority, and modality. This chapter is centered around one of the fundamental philosophical issues, namely the existence of *a priori* knowledge. Casullo traces different approaches, advocated by Kant, Frege, Ayer, Mill and Quine; he also discusses the relationship between *a priori* knowledge and necessary truth (with reference to Kripke's work). This chapter convincingly demonstrates that certain philosophical solutions merit constant analysis and reanalysis. In conclusion Casullo stresses that the epistemological question which needs to be addressed is still: 'How is *a priori* knowledge possible?' (250).

In the last chapter, Max Kölbel, the second editor of the volume, briefly points to new directions in the philosophy of language, observing that 'much recent work in the philosophy of language has been concerned in one way or another with questions concerning the interaction between the standing meaning of expressions and the context in which they are used' (251). Among the new directions he mentions double index semantics, the relations between what is said and implicatures, between unarticulated constituents and compositionality, and contextualism and relativism.

This short chapter very well demonstrates both the potential of philosophical research connected with language (and especially semantics), and the healthy state of the discipline. Additionally, the whole volume illustrates the convergent nature of philosophy of language and linguistics, both in earlier and more contemporary research. A very welcome feature of the *CCPL* is a list of over 60 key terms with brief explanations, and an additional bibliography with suggestions for further reading corresponding to each chapter. These features, together with the comprehensive introductions to individual topics, make *CCPL* a highly accessible guide to research in contemporary philosophy of language.

Whereas *CCPL* is a perfect introduction to the main tenets of research, *RCPL* provides a comprehensive overview of numerous fundamental and more advanced topics. This volume is composed of 68 texts divided into seven sections (preceded by a short introduction), dealing with the following major issues: core topics, foundations of semantics, parts of speech, methodology,

logic for philosophers of language, philosophy of language for the rest of philosophy, and historical perspectives. Gillian Russell very clearly introduces the aim and intention of the *Routledge Companion*: she claims that if one wants to be a good philosopher, one 'ought to study a lot of philosophy of language' (4), and the *Companion* is intended 'to make the literature on many topics in the philosophy of language accessible to a variety of audiences: those who are studying the subject for the first time, those who are already philosophers working in other areas, and even professional philosophers of language who might want to survey a contemporary work in some unfamiliar sub-area' (5). And indeed, the broad scope, impressive coverage of research topics, and the expertise of individual authors (a *Who's Who* of contemporary philosophy of language, to name only Barbara Abbott, Kent Bach, John Burgess, Robyn Carston, Michael Devitt, Robert Freidin, Laurence Horn, Peter Ludlow, François Recanati, Scott Soames and Jason Stanley) make the volume an excellent introduction and advanced reading at the same time.

The 15 articles in Section I, 'Core Topics', discuss technical terms used in semantic theory (such as extension, intension), the relations between semantics and pragmatics, logical form, and the relations between natural languages and formal languages, different treatments of presupposition in logic, philosophy, and linguistics (including Dynamic Semantics and Discourse Representation Theory), implicature, different views on pragmatic enrichment, meaning and communication, compositionality, context-sensitivity and relativism, understood as 'the view that some assertions or beliefs can be characterized as accurate, or objectively correct, only relative to a context of assessment' (133). Other articles in this section discuss topics often neglected in introductory texts but also crucial for semantic analyses; these include focus and intonation, classical and contemporary views on vagueness, a very interesting discussion of truth and reference in fiction, and, rather surprisingly (from the perspective of the overall organization of the volume and the goal of this section), a chapter on empty names, and on Relevance Theory.

Section II, 'Foundations of Semantics', comprises 9 texts tackling more advanced topics in semantics: reference, theories of truth, analytic truth, propositions, concepts, possible worlds semantics, dynamic semantics, event semantics and skepticism about meaning. In all chapters the issue are presented in appropriate historical and methodological context, with brief outlines of most recent research. Section III is devoted to 'Parts of Speech' (though the section title on page 305 erroneously repeats 'Foundations of Semantics'). The 14 individual articles discuss philosophical aspects of names, verbs, adjectives, quantifiers and determiners, adverbs, but also different conditionals (indicative and subjunctive), generics, anaphora, descriptions, plurals, mass terms and questions. The discussion often refers to traditional views and contrasts them with most recent approaches, pointing to the relevance of non-standard and alternative views. One would expect here further chapters devoted to speech acts and speech events, such topics, however, are not covered by separate entries, and speech acts are briefly mentioned only in Kent Bach's chapter on meaning and communication (1.7), and in the sub-section dealing with philosophy of language for normative ethics (6.4).

Whereas the first three sections include fundamental material usually well covered in most introductions and encyclopedias devoted to philosophy of language, sections IV, V and VI provide articles on topics not so often discussed in such publications, though of considerable importance for the discipline. And so, Section IV is devoted to methodology, and the 6 texts discuss the role of experiment, linguistics (particularly syntax and semantics, but also pragmatics), psychology, mathematical methods (with very interesting case studies integrating findings relevant for linguistics and philosophy of language), artificial languages, and the role of intuitions (where

Michael Devitt advocates viewing intuitions as empirical judgments); a separate – introductory – chapter on methodology in philosophy, and philosophy of language in particular, would have been a very welcome addition to this section.

Section V, 'Logic for Philosophers of Language', brings 9 chapters devoted to model theory (in this chapter John Burgess introduces some of the topics further developed in the following texts), logical quantifiers, logics of tense and time, modal logic, many-valued logics, dynamic logic in analyzing natural language, Montague's approach to semantics, and intuitionism. These chapters show both the strengths and weaknesses of different technical tools from formal disciplines applied to philosophical inquiries, and at the same time the changing face of philosophy of language (in comparison with, for example ordinary language philosophy).

Section VI includes 9 chapters discussing the importance and contribution of philosophy of language for 'the rest of philosophy'. Topics discussed here include epistemology, metaphysics, metaethics, also apriority, necessity and meaning, and a very interesting subsection on 'philosophy of language form normative ethics', with two chapters looking at language, gender, and sexuality (by Sally McConnell-Ginet), and language and race (co-authored by Luvell Anderson, Sally Haslanger, and Rae Langton). These are definitely new areas of interest for philosophy of language, and the discussion involves such issues as derogation, epithets, slurs, prejudices, generics and stereotypes. The weakness of this discussion is that the relevant examples come exclusively from English, which might suggest that some of the issues (e.g. masculine generics) are idiosyncratic to this language.

It would be also very interesting to see in this section a chapter discussing the importance of philosophy of language for research in philosophy of literature, with reference to such issues as the status of fictional beings, proper names in fiction, possible world semantics as applied to literary works, etc.

The last section provides 8 articles looking at historical perspectives. This is a very welcome addition to all other texts, as it puts the discussion into context, and demonstrates the noble pedigree of the discipline. Individual chapters look at ancient, medieval and modern philosophy of language, the work and legacy of Frege, Russell, and Wittgenstein, logical positivism and Quine, ordinary language philosophy, and a brief history of generative grammar. In his chapter on Frege, Russell, and Wittgenstein, Michael Potter observes that their principal contribution 'is not so much that they applied philosophical methods to the study of language as they applied linguistic methods to the study of certain problems in philosophy' (852). This brief remark adds further support for the claim about the convergent nature of philosophy of language and linguistics, in both contemporary and historical dimensions. On the other hand, the closing remark by Robert Freidin claiming that 'the study of modern generative grammar over the past sixty plus years has yielded an understanding of the nature of human language, its universal character, and the ways in which languages can vary, that is far beyond what preceded during several thousand years' (914), sounds pretentiously exaggerated.

All chapters conclude with comprehensive references, some also include very useful lists of related topics cross-referencing to other articles in the volume. Though the chapters form self-contained mini-guides to the presented topics, there is also a certain degree of overlap between individual chapters, thanks to which the discussed issues are presented from different theoretical perspectives.

The broad coverage of topics is definitely a very important aspect of *RCPL*, at the same time this means that the absence of certain major topics (such as speech acts, metaphor, the relation between philosophy of language and rhetoric and argumentation, linguistic relativism) is even more visible. This, however, is only a minor complaint, because the overall assessment of the volume has to be definitely positive, even enthusiastic. It is a most useful research guide, of great and lasting value not only for intermediate students, but also for researchers from different fields.

John Searle has observed some time ago (in *Mind: A Brief Introduction*) that the center of attention has moved in contemporary philosophy from language to mind. However, the two volumes forcefully demonstrate that philosophy of language remains in the very center of philosophical research, as it is, in the words of Scott Soames (in *Philosophy of Language*), the 'midwife of the scientific study of language, and language use'.

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