

MEANING WITHOUT ANALYTICITY

ESSAYS ON LOGIC, LANGUAGE AND MEANING

by

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CAMBRIDGE SCHOLARS PUBLISHING

“Only in the context of a sentence does a word have a meaning.”

—Gottlob Frege, 1884.

“For a large class of cases of the use of the word ‘meaning’—even if not for all cases—the word can be explained thus: The meaning of a word is its use in language.”

—Ludwig Wittgenstein, (PI, §43).

“To imagine a language means to imagine a form of life.”

—Ludwig Wittgenstein (PI, §19).

“While all language or symbol-meanings are what they are as parts of a system, it does not follow that they have been determined on the basis of their fitness to be such members of a system; much less on the basis of their membership in a comprehensive system. The system may be simply the language in common use. Its meanings hang together not in virtue of their examined relationship to one another, but because they are current in the same set of group habits and expectations. They hang together because of group activities, group interests, customs and institutions.”

—John Dewey, *Logic*, 1938.

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PREFACE

This volume assembles a baker's dozen of my papers focused on language, logic and meaning, 1981-2000. Five were originally published in *Dialectica*, the Swiss journal of the philosophy of knowledge, the title essay in *Logique et Analyse* from Belgium, two in *Erkenntnis*, the international journal, and five elsewhere. Nine of the papers were published in continental Europe and are chiefly focused on meaning and formal semantics, though these themes are here conceived from a contextualist point of view involving considerable sympathy for the pragmatic tradition. The papers become more explicitly oriented to the evaluation of the pragmatic tradition as they progress in the sequence provided.

The papers were selected and ordered less with a view to chronology than with a view to present interest, thematic development and potential usefulness to the contemporary American-European interplay of pragmatic and analytic themes. I have chiefly omitted papers where their substance has already gone into my prior books. This set of essays develops themes from my *Context for Meaning and Analysis* (Rodopi, 1993).

The first paper strikes a general theme of the volume: the relation of meaning and language in logic and linguistics to meaning and language as a social art and phenomenon within varying cultural settings. There one will find, as I see it, a distinctive approach to the theme of semantics for natural language. Something of this focus is maintained throughout the volume. While the papers earlier in the book concentrate on logic and language from a more technical point of view, the opening social and cultural context for these themes is recalled and elaborated as the sequence advances. The last three papers chiefly center on figures of the classical pragmatist tradition.

I aim for a mid-Atlantic and Atlanticist book of a sort, suited to help take readers through the relationships of American analytic and American pragmatist treatments of some central themes in contemporary philosophy. These papers combine, as I estimate, an insider and outsider perspective on American developments and are somewhat colored by the perspective from afar. Though language does indeed have its influence on science, scholarship and cognition generally, the degree of this depends more on the cultural background and on the particular practices involved in scientific and scholarly inquiry.

Basic to the outlook of this book is a pervasive and underlying Peircean fallibilism, partly expressed in my Quine-like rejection of the analytic-synthetic distinction; and this combines with an anti-skeptical, contextualist theory of meaning and inquiry and a related view of the justification of belief or theory acceptance. Thus, in a sense, I take my start from Quine's "turn toward pragmatism" in his "Two Dogmas of Empiricism," though I have attempted to employ the resources of the pragmatic tradition in opposition to excessively formalist and more skeptical elements in the writings of Quine and Davidson. Along the way, there is much said about some other chief thinkers of my interest including Frege, Putnam, Fodor, Peirce and Dewey.

The inspiration and composition of this volume owe a considerable debt of gratitude to W. V. Quine. This is evident in the many references to his work to be found below. Quine provides a critical standard in the mediation between American analytic philosophy and the pragmatist tradition—which it eclipsed at the start of the Cold War. I am more specifically indebted to some years of intensive correspondence in the late 1980's and early 1990's; and beyond that, Van kindly provided permission to translate and publish his Stanford University Immanuel Kant Lectures—presently available in my German edition: Willard Van Orman Quine, *Wissenschaft und Empfindung, Die Immanuel Kant Lectures* (Frommann-Holzboog: Stuttgart, 2003). This provided a marvelous opportunity to think through Quine's philosophy again, both the points of agreement and my critical departures. It is unfortunate that Van did not live to see the project completed. He did provide some advice on the early drafts for the translation. After thinking through Quine again in two languages, I return with new confidence to the essays here collected.

Although in a less personal way, the essays assembled here are also especially indebted to the writings of Hilary Putnam and Donald Davidson—Putnam because I have been a habitual reader for several decades, and because his work has been an immense help to me in navigating both Quine and the classical pragmatists; and Davidson because of the continuing interest and influence of his writings on meaning and interpretation. I believe that those who have followed these three writers or who have found significance in the contemporary recovery of the pragmatist tradition will also find the present book of interest.

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July 2008