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Dino Buzzetti and Maurizio Ferriani (eds.)

Speculative Grammar, Universal Grammar and Philosophical Analysis of Language

SPECULATIVE GRAMMAR, UNIVERSAL GRAMMAR AND PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS OF LANGUAGE

Edited by

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D.B. M.F.

Bologna, September 1986

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PREFACE

The present volume is the outcome of a seminar on «Speculative Grammar, Universal Grammar, and Philosophical Analysis» held at the University of Bologna, Department of Philosophy, in 1984. The seminar was planned by a research group consisting of Dino Buzzetti, Maurizio Ferriani, Eva Picardi and Giorgio Sandri, all members of the University of Bologna, and of Mirella Capozzi and Massimo Mugnai, respectively members of the University of Siena and the University of Florence.

The research aimed at considering various aspects of the interplay between linguistic theories on the one hand, and theories of meaning and logic on the other. The point of view was mainly historical, but a theoretical approach was also considered relevant. Theories of grammar and related topics were taken as a focal point of interest; their interaction with philosophical reflections on language was examined in a series of lectures, given both by linguists and philosophers. Each lecture was about particular problems somehow connected with the main theme and each one dealt with different authors and periods, ranging from the Middle Ages to the present day. The resulting picture is understandably very selective and cannot be in any way exhaustive; nevertheless, some unifying patterns can be perceived among the various themes under discussion.

The survey is not confined, however, to a reflection on the most well-known aspects or the most important period of speculative, philosophical or universal grammars in the history of Western thought. Thus, the contribution of speculative grammarians is here related to that of medieval philosophers concerned with quidditative discourse (i.e. related to the essence of things) as expressed especially by definition, while the analysis of the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic aspects of Leibniz's *characteristica universalis* helps in an examination of the relation between signs and concepts. Thus, alongside the specific traits of XVIIth and XVIIIth century grammars most commonly considered, less fre-

quently examined aspects emerge: the impact of the evolution of word classes during the phase of the gradual formation of Enlightenment linguistic theories; the space assigned to the study of language factors by the *Encyclopédie*; the supremacy finally assigned to the French language or to the «situation language» as symptoms of the decline of that phase.

A central topic in this volume concerns the recurring polemic of certain logicians and philosophers towards traditional grammatical categories as having a misleading influence with regard to the possibility of establishing a universal grammar or a logic not conditioned by the structure of natural languages. Thus, for Kant, grammar is not *a priori*, since it cannot avoid lexical considerations, whereas logic is; Peirce draws inspiration from medieval speculative grammar to establish the semiotic, linguistic and logical categories indispensable to the construction of a universal grammar; Frege believes psychology to exercise a distorting influence through grammar, preventing a correct access to linguistic meaning. But even this topic is, from a certain point of view, reconsidered. From the essays presented here, it may be seen that: the strong links that Kant acknowledged to exist between thought and language imposed upon him the problem of the objective reference of words/concepts; Peirce does not neglect certain textbooks of historical and comparative linguistics; and Frege probably owes something to some logical and linguistic doctrines of the much blamed psychologists.

Moreover, the essays presented here do not fail to consider current discussions about problems emerging at the borderline between philosophical, logical and linguistic interest. Thus Husserl's philosophy of language is seen here as lying at the origin both of a grammatical theory (which has recently been further developed) based on a theory of dependence relations between parts of sentences, and of a view of meaning based on an analysis of features of certain mental acts and of their relationship with different uses of language. Finally, a comparison is also made between strategies applied in recent formal grammars to accommodate cases of divergence between syntactic and semantic properties connected with the very rich lexical apparatus of natural language, with specific regard to the role of meaning postulates in classical Montague Grammar.

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