Meaning and referent:
for a linguistic approach[1]

Abstract. A recent volume on semantics (Eco et al. 1988) groups a variety of papers under the title *Meaning and Mental Representations.* This volume presents different points of view concerning the problem of meaning, a cross-section of contemporary thought, in the Anglo-American world for the most part. An introductory essay sketches in broad outline the current scene, describing two approaches to linguistic meaning which appear to be quite incompatible, logical semantics and psychological semantics. It is important for semantics, as for any other discipline, to examine what brings about an apparent internal incompatibility. The vantage point of that essay is first adopted here in an attempt to bring out as sharply as possible the main point at issue between the two camps: "It is precisely on the problem of whether meaning is primarily a psychological or logical notion that they are most directly opposed" (p. 5[2]). Then the situation is examined from the point of view of a linguist, which is not necessarily either that of a psychologist or that of a logician, in an attempt to show that the apparent incompatibility arises from an incomplete view of language.

1. Logical vs. psychological approaches.

Eco et al. 1988 attempts to confront the two best known approaches to semantics today. Two of the editors present these approaches in an introductory essay. To provide the basis for the logical point of view, they have chosen a citation from Frege:

> . . . one man's idea is not that of another; while the sign's sense may be the common property of many and therefore is not a part or a mode of the individual mind (p. 4).

Few would take issue with the point that our "ideas"—the various mental entities constituting our world of conscious awareness—are personal, individual, inalienable, incommunicable as such. The meaning involved in language, on the other hand, is general, common to many speakers, and so is communicable. From this, according to Frege, it follows that meaning must be sought, not in the individual mind, but in something we all have in common—in the external world, or at least in the relation of language with the extra-mental world.

Hence logical approaches like truth condition semantics ensure the objectivity and realism of their analyses by seeking meaning in the relationship between language and extra-mental reality. In spite of this effort to be realistic, however, such approaches are criticized for being "too abstract and not sufficiently concerned with the actual practice of speaking and understanding a language" (p. 5). Admittedly, any theory of semantics which fails to throw light on the endlessly varied workings of a language, many of which are not directly involved with such truth relationships, can hardly be considered adequate for linguists.

A psychological approach avoids such criticisms by considering meaning as "what is converted into speech by a speaker and conveyed to a hearer" (p. 10). In such an approach meaning is a psychic entity, a reality which is strictly intra-mental. Semantics will then attempt to analyze the "psychological reality" of such constructs or representations. Psychological approaches thus attempt to focus on the reality of language processes, on what is involved in speaking and understanding a language, but in so doing are taxed with losing sight of the relationship between language and external reality. As a consequence, such approaches are criticized because "notions of truth and reference seem to lose almost all of their interest" (p. 10). The point of view of one contributor to the volume is summarized as follows:

> It is, says Johnson-Laird, a decisive objection against most theories in the cognitive tradition—semantic networks, semantic decomposition, meaning postulates—that "they say nothing about how words relate to the world". All they do is to tell how words are related to words, or how sentences can be paraphrased by other sentences; but it is a fallacy—the "symbolic fallacy"—to assume that meaning is merely a matter of relating one set of symbols to another. The meaning of a sentence, what we grasp when it is uttered in particular circumstances can, for example, guide our movements and help us in orienting ourselves in the physical world; but there is nothing in the theories committed to the symbolic fallacy to explain how this could possibly happen, given that they are silent on how words relate to the world. (p. 15)

Clearly, any such theory has an apparently insurmountable problem in explaining how the meaning of a sentence can impinge on our extra-linguistic behavior. More generally, it has the problem of explaining how ordinary speakers actually do talk about reality outside of language and outside of the mind. Furthermore, if a theory of semantics is concerned not just with the meaning resulting from constructing a sentence but also with the meaning of the elements that enter into that constructing, it is confronted with explaining where words come from

in the first place, words whose meaning is common to all those who speak the language. From the point of view of both the ordinary speaker and the linguist, then, it seems that linguistic meaning is somehow connected with extra-linguistic reality.

The two positions appear to be irreconcilable. On the one hand it is maintained that "semantics with no treatment of truth condition is not semantics" (p. 11) and on the other that "reference to the independently existing reality is . . . at best irrelevant to semantics" (p. 15). And yet, as the authors of the essay remark, "one tends to feel that no principled opposition between the logical and the psychological approach to language ought to exist" (p. 5). Certainly, with respect to language itself there can be no real incompatibility and so it may be useful to focus on the problem from the viewpoint of language. That is, perhaps a strictly linguistic approach will throw some light on the problem.

2. A linguistic approach.
2.1 The intended message. By a linguistic approach, I have in mind one based on the observation of the act of language (speaking or writing) and what immediately surrounds it. Let me begin with a passage from a novel:

> Her mind, nine-tenths of the time, was a soft aching blank. She would begin a sentence and forget to finish it. Dick became accustomed to the way she would say three words, and then, her face becoming suddenly null and empty, lapse into silence. *What she had been going to say had gone clean out of her head.* If he gently prompted her to continue, she looked up, not seeing him, and did not answer. (Lessing 1961:157; my italics)

In this passage, which obviously portrays a person who is seriously ill, the italicized sentence depicts vividly a situation of interest to any linguist concerned with what we say and what we talk about. The character portrayed here had something in mind to evoke by means of language and the moment it slipped out of consciousness she was unable to continue her sentence. Likely we have all been in a similar, but, thank God, not identical, situation which we might well have expressed as follows: "I've forgotten what I was going to say." In making some such statement, we clearly have the impression that we 'had something to say', that we had some particular experience in mind, some conscious awareness that we had intended to represent and express, but that we have momentarily forgotten.

This paper will examine the status of this mental content, this bit of experience "I was going to say", called here the INTENDED

MESSAGE because it provides the message one intends to communicate. I am going to maintain not merely that it is normal for us to be more or less aware of having something to say whenever we speak or write, but that being at least minimally aware of it is a necessary prior condition of any act of language. That is, I shall argue that we cannot speak unless we have both something to say and the will to say it, unless we have an intended message. The point is important because the intended message is constantly present before and during any act of language and for this reason is easy to overlook—has in fact been overlooked by many scholars who are concerned with meaning and what we talk about.[3]

What I am proposing here—the necessary prior existence of an intended message—is by no means new. It has been evoked in different ways in recent years by a number of people working in cognitive approaches. For example, if I understand correctly, this is what is meant by Jackendoff (1983:28) when he speaks of the "projected world" or "experienced world" as contrasted with the "real world" and remarks that "we talk about what we see". Of course the intended message is not limited to what we perceive since we can also talk about things we remember, things we imagine, things we think about—about whatever comes into our minds. Indeed, the intended message of a given act of language may be drawn from any portion of our stream of consciousness, vague or clear, simple or complex, dreamt, felt or consciously conceived since anything which enters our experience of the moment may be focused on with the intention of depicting it by means of language and saying it. Since we are not obliged to "language" everything we experience—it would, in fact, be a serious pathological condition if we had no control over whether we undertake an act of language or not, if we had to talk about everything that we think about—our stream of conscious awareness continues uninterrupted whether we intend to express some portion of its content or not. All this leads us to make a distinction between our experience as such and those portions or aspects of it which become the focus of a linguistic intention, between what we talk about and what we want to say about it.

It should be clear that, because our universe of experience arises from perception, memory, imagination, etc., faculties whose manifestations extend far beyond the use of language, and because it exists independently of our speaking about it, our universe of experience is not part of language.[4] The relation of the intended message to language is not quite so clear because it is a transitional phenomenon. As we have just seen, the intended message arises before the act of language

and so has a certain independence with regard to it, and yet there would
be no intended message if one had no language. Thus it is not easy to
discern exactly what our language contributes to it. In any case, the
distinction between what we talk about and what we want to say about
it will provide an adequate basis for what follows.

2.2 Locating the referent. When we so wish, then, we can talk about
absolutely anything we focus on in our experience from the most
fleeting impression of well-being or malaise to the most brilliantly
conceived theory. On the other hand, we can talk about absolutely
nothing we do not somehow experience, so that our universe of expe-
rience is the source of every intended message, of everything we can
express by means of language. That is to say, the only limitation on
what we can talk about is that we must be at least minimally aware of
it at the moment of speaking. To say that we talk about our experience
may appear to be a commonplace of little interest, but when we turn to
the relationship between our experience and the meaning of the utter-
ance, between our experience and what we actually say, it soon be-
comes clear that this commonplace entails a view of linguistic refer-
ence differing from that of many writers on the subject. That is to say,
if it is true that we talk always and only about our experience, then any
sentence necessarily refers to the facet of our experience involved in
the intended message. In other words, the immediate referent, the
reality outside language we refer to, is within the mind not outside it,
part of our experiential thought, not some physical object. As Jack-
endoff points out:

> What the information [language conveys] is *about*—the *reference* of linguistic
> expressions—is not the real world, as in most semantic theories, but the world
> as construed by the speaker. (Eco et al 1988:84)

Although the proposal that the experience focused on by the in-
tended message is the referent of a sentence means that the linguistic
referent is necessarily intra-mental, not "out there in the extra-mental
world", it nevertheless meets the essential requirement for a referent:
being outside language. Every sentence, therefore, has a referent: as
the outcome of an act of language, a sentence refers to the speaker's
experience.[5] On the other hand, a sentence normally gives no indica-
tion of the actual relation between the speaker's experience and an
extra-mental correlate in the "real" world. That is, whether a speaker
is imagining some scene, hallucinating, lying or simply reporting what
is perecieved is of no consequence for a linguistic analysis. For lin-

guists, the task is to understand and describe the nature of language in order to explain how it represents and expresses our experience, commutes it into something said, and their professional competence, based on the means of observation and analysis at their disposal, does not extend beyond the frontiers of language.

2.3 Meaning as representation. So far we have seen that the referent of a sentence is part of the speaker's experience. What about its meaning? Meaning is here considered to be a mental construct within language which correlates with the referent in the way a representation correlates with what is represented. The point to be made here is that meaning, being only a representation of the speaker's experience, should not be identified with it. Since some writers have done just this, the point should be made more explicit.

To distinguish between the meaning of a sentence and the experience involved in the intended message permits us to explain a number of observations concerning language. For example, one frequently hears the view that human speech cannot express the fullness of our experience. One writer, a theologian, makes the point quite clearly:

> In our words we can never give more than an abstract of our thought and feeling, and this abstract can only be a weak outline. Indeed, even those men who are skilled at fashioning thoughts—the poets and artists of genius—realise that they cannot put into words what is within them in pictures and thoughts. The pain that dwells in human conversation is this: that we cannot express our thoughts and our love adequately in words. In our words, there can never be more than a scanty fraction of what is in our minds and hearts. Human speech is therefore never more than an indication of the invisible and inaudible world of man's inner being. Human speech demands of the listener that he take careful note of the reality which it expresses, but which it cannot completely retain. If he is not capable of that, he cannot grasp the underlying reality that human speech is intended to express. The most perfect human speech must remain empty for him. (Schmaus 1966:194)

Northrop Frye (1971:1124) is particularly sensitive to the elusive and seemingly erratic processes whereby the intended message, "completely incommunicable" as such, comes into being:

> . . . it is clear that all verbal structures with meaning are verbal imitations of that elusive psychological and physiological process known as thought, a process stumbling through emotional entanglements, sudden irrational convictions, involuntary gleams of insight, rationalized prejudices, and blocks of panic and inertia, finally to reach a completely incommunicable intuition.

Even when the intended message has a clear intellectual content there may be difficulty representing it satisfactorily, as the following remark

by Einstein (1981:327) suggests: "Has not every one of us struggled for words although the connection between 'things' was already clear?" This struggle for words, seen in the poet's constant challenge to give "to airy nothing a local habitation and a name", and in speakers' or writers' efforts to find a satisfactory linguistic expression for their intended message, is a clear manifestation of the representational function of human language. Even on a more homely level, an ordinary sentence like "I'm cold" can express different experiences, sensations that vary at least in intensity, a fact which shows clearly that the linguistic meaning does not reproduce exactly any one of them.

To keep experiential thought (= linguistic referent) and representation (= meaning) distinct is not easy, as William James points out in the following passage where he comments on the relation between the intended message and the word-meanings that render it:

> Has the reader never asked himself what kind of mental fact is his intention of saying a thing before he has said it? It is an entirely definite intention, distinct from all other intentions, an absolutely distinct state of consciousness, therefore; and yet how much of it consists of definite sensorial images, either of words or of things? Hardly anything! Linger, and the words and things come into the mind; the anticipatory intention, the divination is there no more. But as the words that replace it arrive, it welcomes them successively and calls them right if they agree with it, and rejects them and calls them wrong if they do not. It has therefore a nature of its own of the most positive sort, and yet what can we say about it without using words that belong to the later mental facts that replace it? (1983:245)

It is interesting to note here the way James depicts the rejecting or accepting of words according to whether the representation they bring to the sentence corresponds sufficiently to the intended message.

In the light of such observations, it seems obvious that as a speaker my experience and my linguistic representation of that experience are two different mental entities. Before going on to discuss what this view entails for our understanding of the nature of human language, however, let us examine briefly a contrary view which does not distinguish the two. According to the authors of the essay, meaning in psychological semantics is "*what* is converted into speech by a speaker and conveyed to a hearer" (Eco et al. 1988:10; my italics). This amounts to identifying meaning with the speaker's experience because there is no representational mechanism proper to language, "no further step of translating conceptual structure into yet another level of structure to find its interpretation: expressions at the level of conceptual structure simply *are* the interpretations of utterances", ac-

cording to Jackendoff (Ibid., p. 82). That is to say, this approach postulates that what we talk about is part of our mental world, our experience, but rejects the notion that linguistic meaning is another mental construct, distinct from the first.[6] If linguistic meaning is indeed indistinguishable from extra-linguistic experience, the speaker's construal of the world, it necessarily follows that semantics is part of psychology, "an element of a wider theory of psychology, fully integrated into the study of mind" (Ibid., p.81).[7]

This position, as we have seen, is taxed with failing to show "how words relate to the world". That is to say, in thus assimilating meaning and speaker's momentary experience, it fails to bring out the distinction between what we talk about and what we say about it. In other words, it abolishes the representational function of language, reducing language to a signalling role: "the semantic properties of utterances can be explicated *by virtue of form alone*" (Ibid., p. 82; italics in the original). But this poses a problem, the fundamental problem for a linguist: how can an arbitrary physical sign, a "form alone", call to the mind of some listener or reader some facet of "a completely incommunicable intuition", an experience of the speaker which is personal, unique? If meaning were not distinct from the intended message, communication would not be possible because a linguistic sign can call to mind only that meaning which, for speakers of a language, is already linked to it. This is why there may well be a "struggle for words", a struggle not to find appropriate signals (the physical sign is, in any case, arbitrary), but rather to find those pre-instituted units of meaning, concepts, best corresponding to the particular experience to be communicated. Hence the absolute necessity for a linguist to distinguish between the experiential referent and its linguistic representation, between what, from the linguist's point of view,[8] we talk about and what we say about it.

For those scholars who recognize this distinction, what exists in the mind before language intervenes is a prior state of thought, what Sapir (1921:38) calls "the 'pre-rational' plane, of images, which are the raw material of concepts". Saussure (1916:155) is more explicit:

Psychologically, not considering its expression through words, our thought is only an amorphous and indistinct mass. Philosophers and linguists have always agreed in recognizing that without the help of signs, we would be incapable of distinguishing two ideas in a clear and constant way. Taken by itself, thought is like a nebula where nothing has any necessary outline. There are no preestablished ideas, and nothing is distinct before the appearance of tongue. (my translation)

For Vygotsky (1969:126):

> The structure of speech does not simply mirror the structure of thought; that is why words cannot be put on by thought like a ready-made garment. Thought undergoes many changes as it turns into speech. It does not merely find expression in speech; it finds its reality and form.

That is to say, language provides the means for both representing and expressing "thought" (= experience), but thought before it is thus languaged is different from thought once it has been languaged. The philosopher Gilson (1969:126–127) brings out this difference in describing the difficulty involved in observing and talking about "thought in itself", before it is languaged:

> All one can try to think concerning the not-yet-spoken is conditioned by the impossibility of doing it without resorting to language. The only chance of observing *thought in itself* would be to catch a glimmer of it at the fleeting moment when it descends into language, like the green ray the setting sun sends out just as it plunges into the sea. But thought becoming language is already language and besides even if the experience of pure thought were possible, it would be necessary to make use of language to communicate it. All one can do then is to work back up from spoken thought to that which is being spoken, doing one's best to discern the future thought of after-language in *that which is being embodied*. At best, this is difficult because what is poorly conceived cannot be expressed clearly, *but there would not be any language if this could not be conceived at all.* (My translation and underlining)

This distinction between after-language thought, the outcome of representing the message, and thought in itself or before-language thought, the content of the intended message before it is converted into the meaning-units provided by one's language, entails far reaching consequences concerning the nature of language itself. Some of these will now be examined briefly for the light they throw on the apparent contradiction between logical and psychological approaches.

2.4 Implications of distinguishing representation from experience.
From what we have just seen, it would be an error to reduce the role of language to merely signalling the experience of the speaker, to mirroring the intended message. Rather, "the central function of human language" according to Waldron (1985:xv) is "the manner in which it *mediates* between sense experience and conceptual thought." That is to say, the role of language is not to provide just the physical means of expressing our experience but rather the mental means of representing it, of depicting it in expressible units of meaning, each

with a sign, and of combining these into sentences. More concretely, our experience, which is a continuum, does not come pre-packaged in neat word or sentence bundles; it is our language which furnishes us with the extraordinary capacity both to think, or more precisely, to rethink, to represent, any experience in this way and to say it. Although a number of scholars have put forward this view, to my knowledge only one linguist, Gustave Guillaume, has adopted it as the very basis of his observations and developed it into a full-fledged theory of language. It will be useful, therefore, to outline some of his findings.

For Guillaume, then, language is essentially a "mechanism for commuting thought into something said" (translated from Guillaume 1960:5). The "thought" to be commuted is that portion of our stream of experience which constitutes the intended message and the "something said" is the meaning of the sentence resulting from the act of language. Furthermore, since this operation of commuting can be undertaken at any moment the speaker wishes, language must be conceived of as including a component making possible its repetition. A component with the potential of making an indefinite series of operations possible is generally called a mechanism. In language, this potential, consisting of a set of mechanisms, or better psycho-mechanisms, for representing our ever-changing experience, Guillaume calls tongue (= *langue*).

The "commuting" itself necessarily involves a binary operation: representing the intended message by resolving it into the appropriate meaning-units-with-signs (= words) provided by the language and expressing it by combining these units into a coherent set to constitute a representation of the whole. That is, to make this commuting capacity available to the speaker on a permanent basis, language, any language, must provide both a word-constructing mechanism for representing experience and a sentence-constructing mechanism for expressing what is thus represented. This is the reason both the word and the sentence are language universals, found in every language and in every act of language:

> The human principle underlying language is that expression is possible only if something has first been represented. The necessity of representing something before expressing it is universal in space and time. (Guillaume 1984:94–95).

To avoid misunderstanding the crucial phase between experience and expression, the term used to name it, "representation", should perhaps be clarified. This term can, of course, be used in a much wider sense than that intended here since language is not our only means of

representing experience. The painter, for example, can represent his impressions without the explicit intervention of his language. Indeed, our experience itself might even be called a representation since it is not the universe itself which is present in our consciousness. In the present context, however, the term is used in a more restricted sense to name a level of mental activity proper to language and so distinct from that giving rise to our experience. It is a *re*-presenting because the speaker's experience, already "presented" to our consciousness by means of perception, memory, imagination, etc., is presented again but in a different fashion. That is to say, thanks to the symbolizing role of language there is a certain similitude between the experiential referent and its linguistic representation but, as we saw above in the citation from Schmaus, the richness and uniqueness of the former can never be fully portrayed by the resulting meaning. Indeed, from the point of view of representational potentiality, a word in a language like English can portray an unlimited series of individual occurrences of its experiential correlate.

In like fashion, we have many modes of expressing ourselves, but the term "expression" is here limited to the linguistic mode. Indeed, the very idea of a mechanism of representation instituted by speakers and developed over the centuries to permit expression may serve as a useful criterion for discriminating between our linguistic and non-linguistic modes of expression and as a basis for distinguishing between animal and human language (cf. Guillaume 1984:95).

It is a commonplace that a speaker of English has words available, or at least has the capacity to call them up, whenever he or she undertakes an act of language. This implies that speakers are in permanent possession of their language as a potential for representing anything they may wish to say. That is, the permanent structure of one's language is not a static set of oppositions as Saussure would have it, but rather an instituted means for carrying out certain processes of thought, an acquired mental "program" for actualizing the appropriate words to represent the intended message and combining them into sentences to express it. As such it suggests that the *système de la langue,* the system of tongue, involves an unconscious scanning mechanism permanently available for focussing on our experience, a universe of pre-constructed meaning-schemata ready to confront our universe of experience and represent it. The system of tongue also involves an ordered set of grammatical sub-systems for shaping the meaning thus produced into the word forms required by the sentence being constructed.

In short, postulating a level of representation specific to language prior to and permitting expression leads to the view of language as a binary entity consisting of *langue* and *discours,* of tongue and discourse linked by the operations of representation and expression. Furthermore, the task of linguistics is clear: to describe these operations in terms of the instituted systems of tongue in order to explain the use of words and their combinations observed in discourse. The difficulty of this task, which amounts to describing what cannot be directly observed, is considerable (and in this respect linguistics resembles any other science that attempts to theorize) but the technique of analysis conceived and refined by Guillaume provides one way of surmounting this difficulty.[9]

The importance of the representation phase in the act of language cannot be overemphasized. Without it, human language as we know it would not be possible. Granted instituted representational mechanisms, however, we can understand how it is possible to confront our ever-changing experience and find the means of communicating it. Moreover the importance of tongue as a set of representational potentialities is not limited to providing particular meanings to be expressed since it also provides the mind with a stable backdrop for situating our disorderly before-language thought. In Guillaume's words (1984:143):

> Human language exists only when raw experience is transmuted into *representation.* . . . In all thought there is cogitation. Cogitation involves turbulence. Representation involves abolishing turbulence. To think well is to abolish the turbulence of cogitation. Mental mechanisms can regulate turbulence.

To the extent that experience has been generalized and instituted in stable representational mechanisms, the mind can take its distance from the ebb and flow of experience and impose its own organization on it. It is this which provides, in Guillaume's terms (loc. cit.) man's "deep-seated mental civilization" at any given phase of its development.

3. Conclusion. It is clear that the preoccupation of the linguist is close to that of the psychologist—both are concerned with operations of the mind—but distinct from it since the linguist is concerned with explaining the behavior of words, not the behavior of speakers. It follows that a linguist with this aim in mind will not only avoid the above quoted criticism levelled at logical semantics—being "too abstract and not sufficiently concerned with the actual practice of speaking and under-

standing a language''—but will actually be more concerned with the use of words and their functioning in sentences than will a psychologist.

In like fashion, the linguist's field of observation overlaps that of the logician since both have to examine sentences, but they do it from different points of view. The linguist attempts to work from the observed sentence back up the act of language to its source in tongue. This is quite different from going beyond the sentence to its result, to the effected message, and relating it to extra-mental reality. Is the linguist then to be taxed, as cited above, with "saying nothing about how words relate to the world"? In one sense, yes, because any real sentence, regardless of its truth value, is grist for the linguistic mill. But in a more profound sense, the linguist who distinguishes a level of representation specific to language is concerned with analyzing meaning in the light of the experience expressed and so is constantly relating words through their meaning to the world of the speaker's experience.

This would seem to lay the linguist open to Frege's stricture quoted above:

> One man's idea is not that of another; while the sign's sense may be the common property of many and therefore is not a part or a mode of the individual mind.

Certainly my experience is not, cannot be that of another, whereas the sign's meaning is indeed common to all those who speak a given language. Granted a distinct level for representing meaning, however, there is no contradiction in saying that the meaning of a word, as well as its pronunciation, is acquired mentally by all speakers in much the same way. In fact this seems to be the whole purpose of infants acquiring their mother tongue.

These considerations lead to the conclusion that, for the linguist, meaning consists of the representations made possible by the words of the language and actualized whenever a speaker wishes to express some experience. Much remains to be explored here of course, but the important point is that linguistic meaning is part and parcel of language. As such it can be identified neither with our experience nor with the relation to extra-mental reality, both of which are necessarily outside language. The immediate referent, on the other hand, is to be identified with our experience, or rather, with that portion of it represented by the sentence.

Does this mean that psychological and logical approaches are both off the track? Not necessarily. If the aim of a psychological approach is to examine language as one type of human behavior to be compared with other types, then it may well be justified in ignoring the distinc-

tion between linguistic meaning and the experiential referent. By the same token, it should not be taxed with ignoring the extra-mental referent since "truth conditions" are of little relevance here. Similarly, if the aim of a logical approach is to examine language as a means of arriving at truth, then it too may well be justified in ignoring the distinction between linguistic meaning and the intra-mental referent. But in that case it should not be taxed with ignoring all the inner workings of language since the mental processes involved in producing words and a sentence are of little relevance here. Each of these approaches should be regarded in the light of its own aim.

What then is my point? Simply this: neither psychology nor logic has as its proper aim to discern the nature of human language, and so neither should be criticized for failing to produce an adequate theory of linguistic meaning. On the other hand, adherents of these two disciplines cannot claim to be carrying out the job of linguists since, as we have seen, they do not take into account the whole of language. If, then, there is room for both a logical semantics and a psychological semantics, there is surely room for a linguistic semantics. A properly linguistic approach to meaning is not part of a wider theory of either psychology or logic. Rather, it is part of a theory of language, that is, a theory that attempts to embrace language, the whole of language, and nothing but language. Only by establishing as clearly as possible the limits of their object (cf. Hirtle 1985), particularly insofar as meaning and referent are concerned, and by observing and reflecting on everything within these limits, can linguists hope to make progress in their difficult endeavour to understand the nature of that most remarkable construct we call the mother tongue.

Fonds Gustave Guillaume
Département de langues et linguistique
Université Laval
Québec, Canada G1K 7P4

ENDNOTES

[1] I want to thank several colleagues, particularly John Hewson, Claude Guimier, Peter Blumenthal, Patrick Duffley and Richard Epstein for their helpful comments on this text.

[2] If not otherwise indicated, citations are from Eco et al.

[3] Guillaume was, to my knowledge, the first linguist to take into account the intended message as a necessary condition for any act of language. The expression 'intended message' corresponds to what he usually calls the *visée de discours*, though he characterizes it in various ways according to the particular viewpoint adopted: "the unsayable" (1984:136), "thought

seeking expression" (Ibid., 79), "turbulent thought" (Ibid., 144) and sometimes simply "experience".

[4]On the other hand, it is not at all clear to what extent the system of our language influences the way we experience the world around us.

[5]And so any string of words that does not refer to some experience of the speaker cannot be considered a sentence, a unit of real discourse. Cf. the "colorless green ideas" type.

[6]Cf. also: "There is a *single* level of mental representation, conceptual structure, at which linguistic, sensory, and motor information are compatible" (Jackendoff 1983:17; his italics). ". . . I have not been especially careful to preserve the distinction, tending to use the term conceptual structure when talking about nonlinguistic matters and semantic structure when discussing the relation to language. . . . We will conclude that the terms semantic structure and conceptual structure denote the same level of representation" (Ibid., p. 95). ". . . word meanings are expressions of conceptual structure. That is, there is not a form of mental representation devoted to a strictly semantic level of word meanings, distinct from the level at which linguistic and nonlinguistic information are compatible" (Ibid., p. 110).

[7]The intention here is to depict a point of view, not to summarize the position of any school or author, which may be far more complex. Thus, for certain writers in the cognitive approach there does appear to be a level of representation proper to language.

[8]"From the linguist's point of view" because as far as the ordinary speaker or listener is concerned we talk about the extra-mental, real-world referent, when there is one. By necessary professional bias, the linguist limits his scope to what the speaker had in mind, as we have seen.

[9]For a description of this technique, see Hirtle 1989; for an application to a problem in English, see Hirtle 1988.

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