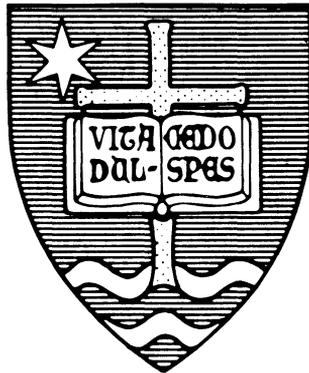


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Editorial

Recently, the field of semantic research has been characterized by the appearance of numerous new theoretical proposals. Each of these follows a different approach, but most have not been shown to be superior to, in competition with, or even distinct from the others. The problem here is that all of us who are professionally involved with the study of language are frequently faced with choices about what to read, what to teach, how to do research, and, of course, what to believe—choices which cannot be made intelligently *without a clear understanding of the relationships, antagonistic or otherwise, between the various semantic theories.* As a result, our choices are less informed, and probably more negative, than they need to be.

Given this situation, a systematic investigation of the interrelationships of the current semantic proposals seems clearly in order. To this end, the editors of the *Notre Dame Journal of Formal Logic* have divided the contemporary semantic scene into several somewhat rough and ready divisions, and we have asked our contributors, while acting as spokespersons for one approach, also to answer as many of the following questions as possible: (1) What are your primary data for semantics? To what extent and in what way do you think semantic accounts should involve describing, predicting or explaining this data? Is there only one correct semantic interpretation for each set of data? If so, what criteria do you use to decide between competing analysis? Do you distinguish between semantic competence and semantic performance? (2) Does your approach involve statements cast in some formal language? If so, is this formalism empirically significant? If not, is your semantics in principle unformalizable? (3) Which aspects of your approach are empirically falsifiable? What sort of empirical evidence is relevant? What would it take to increase the falsifiability of your approach? (4) Which of the claims made by your approach do you consider the most significant and distinctive? What are the problem areas? Where does further research seem necessary? (5) How would you characterize the relationship of your approach to others, both in your division and in other divisions? What aspects of your approach make it (i) competitive with, (ii) superior to, (iii) inferior to, or (iv) combinable with these other approaches? It was our hope that each contribution would focus on one approach to semantics for natural language, but would include as much discussion as possible of the nature of its disagreements and points of contact with others. This sort of comparative evaluation of semantic theories should channel research in fruitful directions and increase collaboration between scholars in the field. We believe that the articles which follow, together with the comments which will appear in the next issue, are a step toward that goal.

Ernest LePore