

## DESCRIPTION FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC

***Project:*** *In search of a unified metasemantics*

**The key objective of the project is to formulate the original and systematic metasemantic theory that would provide the explanation as to how the linguistic items obtain their semantic properties.**

The issues of the nature of meaning of linguistic expressions have been in the centre of the analytic philosophy of language since its constitution as an independent branch of philosophy. At the same time these issues are one of the ways of tackling with the fundamental philosophical question as to what is the relation between words — and thus also our beliefs and knowledge that are expressed in words — and the world.

In the traditional classification the area of the philosophy of language that considers the relation between words and their reference is semantics. In the last few decades typical semantic tasks — which basically boil down to providing a method of specifying meanings systematically — have been increasingly taken over by empirical disciplines like psychology, linguistics or cognitive sciences. It appears then that some new investigation methods and reformulation of the old problems is required for dealing with the questions about the nature of meaning.

It seems that tools for producing these methods are delivered by metasemantics, which has been catching growing philosophers' interest for the last few years. Generally speaking, metasemantics aims to explain how words obtain their meanings. Metasemantics is the subfield of the philosophy of language that explicitly combines the elements of the philosophy of language traditionally understood and metaphysics — hence, metasemantics is sometimes called 'the metaphysics of meaning'.

In the project I am going to apply a metasemantic methodology in order to examine the relation between what meanings is *grounded in* and what *is* meaning. When it comes to grounding of meaning we can speak of two rival paradigms: *productivism* (the meaning of an expression is 'encoded' by the speaker) and *interpretationism* (an expression means something due to the way in which the audience interprets it). I will argue that these paradigms do not exclude each other and that their coexistence reveal that meaning is by nature 'double-grounded'. That, in turn, allows to choose correctly a theory grasping the nature of meaning. It seems to me that the theory of the nature of meaning that, on the one hand, follows from the thesis about double-grounding, and on the other, explains sense of double-grounding — is some holistic account of meaning, according to which meanings of words are what they are as they are parts of the semantic whole i.e. a language.

The results of the project will help to understand the role of language in human cognition as well as the place of a human — as the creature that bears some cognitive relations to the world — within the world.