Logicians who study natural languages usually do so in an abstract and theoretical way. George Lakoff\(^1\) has suggested that it is time they learned some linguistics. Then, the suggestion runs, they would be forced to come to grips with the complex phenomena of a natural language in use and would be able to get beyond the artificiality of study of small isolated fragments of language. Lakoff illustrates his suggestion by criticizing two ways in which logicians have treated the English adverb *slowly* - one in the vein of Donald Davidson, the other in that of Richard Montague. His criticism takes the form of a presentation of a series of examples that he takes to set problem for the Montague and Davidson theories.

I shall re-examine some of the examples that Lakoff presents and claim that they do not invalidate the theoretical approach to language nor the particular views considered concerning adverbs. I shall challenge also some of Lakoff's observations on the English adverb *slowly*. I do not challenge the claim that logicians should learn some linguistics. Of course they should. But it is equally true that all linguists should try to understand the aims and methods of logicians. Only then will they be able to reach a fair and correct assessment of the logician's theories and results.

A detailed account of the logician's approach is left until another occasion. A brief outline will suffice for it to become clear that some of Lakoff's criticisms are question-begging - i.e. they cannot serve as objections to the theoretical approach because they presuppose at the outset that the approach is incorrect. Lakoff criticises theories for failing to answer certain difficult and highly empirical questions concerning linguistic phenomena. The whole point of theorising is to gain some degree of understanding of the phenomena without asking these impossibly difficult questions.

A theory singles out certain aspects of the phenomena as important and rejects others as mere curiosities. A good theory will provide a coherent account of the facts that it selects, and will lead us to new questions that are not trivial yet are answerable by the theory or some natural development of it. In any live and developing science there is room for more than one theory.

\(^1\) George Lakoff, 'Notes On What It Would Take To Understand How One Adverb Works', *The Monist*, 53 (1972), 328–343. Page references are to this essay unless it is stated otherwise.
If a theory is a good one, then it does not matter that it does not explain all the phenomena. Indeed, many perfectly respectable theories will explain not one phenomenon. The phenomena are too complex. They are determined by a large variety of forces, only some of which are within the domain of a theory. All interesting theories are to some extent abstract. They do not predict the actual happenings, but only an idealized approximation to them.

A good theory in linguistics will be like a good theory in other domains. It will select certain phenomena and explain them. It will lead the enquirer to further and soluble questions. It may not give a complete account of any of the complex situations in which language is used in the real world. Judged by these criteria, the theories of Montague and Davidson are good theories. Each tries to show how to give an account of adverbial modification in English in terms of some well-developed theoretical scheme that seems to be leading to further interesting and soluble questions. In the course of time each of these theories may be outmoded. Each is open to a variety of criticisms, but not to the sort of criticism made by Lakoff.

II

Lakoff begins (329) with the mild complaint that of the logicians who have discussed the adverb slowly, only one has asked about the relation between slowly and slow, whereas this is one of the first things that a linguist would have asked. Lakoff points out (335) that most logicians have concentrated on the question of the inference from John walks slowly to John walks.

These remarks suggest that Lakoff thinks that there are some questions that ought to be asked first, and others that ought to be asked afterwards. The defender of the theoretical approach will respond to this suggestion as follows: There is no such thing as the interesting question, or the first question to be answered. What one finds interesting and important, where one begins, will depend, and ought to depend, upon one's theoretical position. There is no point in observing linguistic behaviour waiting for interesting facts to display themselves. One must approach the phenomena from the stand-point of some theory and attempt to extend, test, or confirm that theory. Philosophers and logicians have tended to start where they do because they have been taking the first tentative steps in extending their paradigm of (perhaps modal) quantification theory to a more complex system. They start with the most obviously necessary extension of this paradigm. Those working within the framework of the theory of transformational grammar will begin, and ought to begin, elsewhere. Furthermore, it is important that both logicians and transformational grammarians continue to work in their own ways. At least for the time being we