



# SEMINÁŘ LOGIKY SEMINAR OF LOGIC

Barbara Partee (University of Massachusetts)

## **Psychologism and Anti-Psychologism in the History of Formal Semantics and Changing Notions of Semantic Competence**

In the history of formal semantics, the successful joining of linguistic and philosophical work brought with it some difficult foundational questions concerning the nature of meaning and the nature of knowledge of language in the domain of semantics: questions in part about ‘what’s in the head’ of a competent language-user. As part of my ongoing project on the history of formal semantics, I have revisited the central issues of my 1979 paper “Semantics – Mathematics or Psychology?” in a historical context, as a clash between two traditions, Fregean and Chomskyan, a clash that accompanied early work combining Montague’s semantics with Chomskyan syntax. While Chomsky and most linguists view linguistics as a cognitive science, the Fregean tradition in which Montague worked is strongly anti-psychologistic. Linguists who do formal semantics have generally also seen themselves as contributing to cognitive science, but this seems to require, at least implicitly, some rethinking of the traditional Chomskyan notion of “the competence of the native speaker”. The history of these foundational issues in formal semantics, including the question of whether meanings are “in the head” suggests that we can move toward a less “narrowly psychological” view of what it is to know a language, supported by the work of the philosophers Robert Stalnaker and Tyler Burge.

**Thursday 19/05/2022 | 14.00 CET**

Meeting room („zasedačka“), Institute of Philosophy CAS, Jilská 1, Prague 1