

## Seminar Announcement

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### Meaning, Vagueness and Fuzziness

#### A historical sketch on three interlinked concepts

Rudolf Seising, European Centre for Soft Computing

Tuesday 14th October 2014, 4 p.m.

Room 7, Via Archirafi 34, 90123 Palermo

In analytical philosophy and logics as well as in linguistics in the 20th century the concept of meaning became an important subject.

Gottlob Frege combined his studies on meaning with concepts that have no sharp boundaries. He influenced Bertrand Russell who considered the concept of vagueness in an article with that title in 1923.

Meanwhile Wittgenstein published his *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* with a preface by Russell and Max Black, one of the best experts of the interpretation of Wittgenstein's philosophy, who published *A Companion to Wittgenstein's Tractatus* in 1964, replied to Russell's Vagueness-paper already in 1937.

A critical examination with Black's paper wrote Carl G. Hempel in 1939 and he referred to Charles W. Morris' 1938-book *Foundation of the Theory of Signs* to identify vagueness as "a strictly semiotical term, its determination requires reference to the symbols, to the users, and their designate."

Differently to his opinion concerning the meaning of words and sentences in the *Tractatus* also Wittgenstein considered in his late philosophy the user of a language important. In his *Philosophical Investigations* that Wittgenstein started writing in the 1930s, he let go the idea of a pure logical and therefore non-vague language. Thus, he came to the important result on what is meaning in his philosophy of language: "For a large class of cases – though not for all – in which we employ the word "meaning" it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language."

For further information:

Gabriele Fici

T 091 238 91130

[gabriele.fici@math.unipa.it](mailto:gabriele.fici@math.unipa.it)

*All interested people, in particular students, are invited to participate*

# Words and Automata Research Group

Finally, without knowing Wittgenstein's late philosophy Lotfi Zadeh wondered:

"Can the fuzziness of meaning be treated quantitatively, at least in principle?"

Considering two spaces: (a) a universe of discourse,  $U$ , and (b) a set of terms,  $T$ , which play the roles of names of subsets of  $U$  with generic elements of  $T$  and  $U$  be denoted by  $x$  and  $y$ , he defined the meaning  $M(x)$  of a term  $x$  as a fuzzy subset of  $U$ .

*All interested people, in particular students, are invited to participate*